

**Grandmaster Repertoire**

Parimarjan  
Negi

**1.e4 vs  
The Sicilian III**



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*Grandmaster Repertoire*

# 1.e4 vs The Sicilian II

By

**Parimarjan Negi**



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# Series Introduction

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Several years ago, Nigel Short once gifted me an opening book with the wry comment, “I expect this doubles your chess library.” While that was a slight exaggeration, it is true that I never depended much on opening books for my theoretical knowledge. This scepticism for written material is often rooted in the fact that the modern openings are so fluid, constantly changing, with variations evolving every week. How can a static book keep pace with ideas that are developed, replaced, and forgotten on a weekly basis?

In this series, I aim to provide a foundation and structure around which you can develop a lifelong repertoire with 1.e4. I hope a good number of my recommendations will withstand the relentless assaults of time, but I am realistic enough to know that many of the bright novelties and variations will eventually wither away. However, even if some of the finer details will eventually have to be revised in the future, I believe that the core selection of recommended lines will remain valid for a long time to come.

There is a process by which I have developed my own repertoire, as laid out in this series. In several critical positions I have discussed the pros and cons of different options, and explained why I eventually chose one over the other. Apart from remembering the moves themselves, I hope you will also absorb something of this process, so that you will be able to find your own ideas to react to whatever new developments may come along.

The selection of recommended systems against Black’s various defences has followed a logical pattern, taking into account the structure of the whole repertoire. Throughout the process, I have aimed for active, fluid positions, sometimes sacrificing material but always remaining fundamentally sound. There are a number of long, forcing lines, which are necessary to justify any suggestion these days, but I have endeavoured to show that even seemingly abstract moves are still based on strategic, human principles. To make the best possible use of this book, I encourage you to pay attention to all such explanations, with the aim of building a framework of inter-connected ideas in your own mind.

Parimarjan Negi  
New Delhi, July 2014

# Preface

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It's a little hard to grasp that this is already my third book. In many ways the books have just been a logical continuation of each other; however, the books have been very different from one another, mostly because of the different nature of variations that I have dealt with. So while in the first Sicilian book, I dug deep into well-explored Najdorf variations, this one is more reminiscent of the first book because there are a lot more variations packed together.

In the Dragons, we go for the venerable Yugoslav Attack. It was hard to decide whether to go for the Maroczy Bind or the Yugoslav-style ♖c4 variations against the Accelerated Dragon, but in the end I felt it is more in the spirit of the book to go for ♖c4 variations, even though Black arguably gets more interesting additional options than in the main Dragon.

The choice against the Classical Sicilian was obvious – the Rauzer with ♗g5 is the only line to cause any concerns for Black. Even though the Classical is no longer so popular at the highest levels, it's an intricate web of variations and intersecting move orders, and I have tried my best to bring out the unifying ideas that can help reduce the variations to a few main concepts.

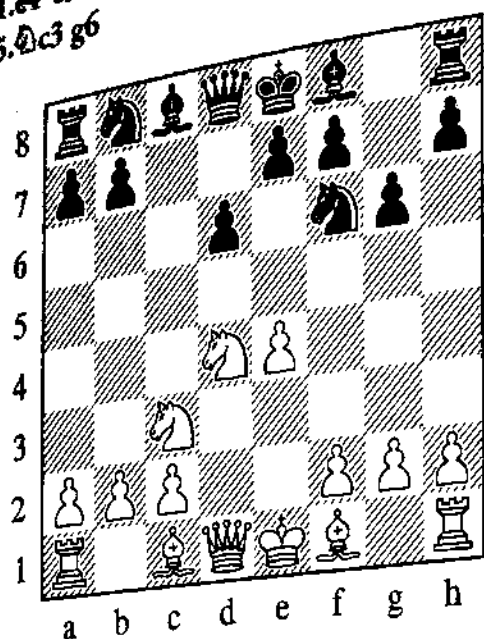
It was much harder to settle on a line against the Sveshnikov. Despite its popularity waning slightly, it is a formidable opening that has withstood many tests. The line I eventually chose is not the most popular, but it's certainly more exciting than the alternatives. Also, I feel it's been under-rated because of computer estimations often hovering around 0.00, even when there are a lot of practical complexities on the board. I was not always able to go deep enough to reach an objective truth, but instead I try to lead you to dynamic and interesting positions which have a lot of scope.

On a broader note, I believe my attitude while analysing the variations has evolved along with the books. Initially, I approached the analysis from the perspective of what I would like as a player – which was to find many different interesting ideas in the challenging lines, but I didn't always try to unify them into a consistent whole. Now, I feel I am able to approach the process more from the perspective of readers – with a primary focus on making the readers comfortable with the ideas underlying the lines, before entering the concrete and dynamic theoretical debates.

Parimarjan Negi  
Stanford, October 2015

8

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘f6  
5.♙c3 g6



The Dragon continues to defy all White's attempts to refute it. I cannot promise to change that assessment, but I can certainly show some effective ways to put Black under pressure.

6.♙e3

I will recommend the most aggressive set-up, which is also the main line. Most players develop the bishop to g7 automatically, but Black occasionally delays it in order to accelerate his queenside play. We will therefore look at A) 6...a6 before discussing the normal B) 6...♙g7.

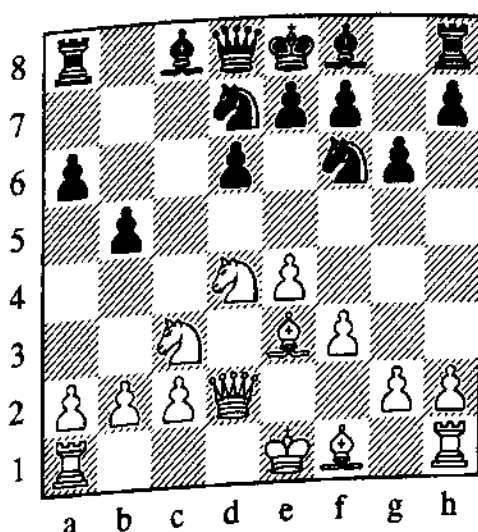
I always found it interesting to note that 6...♙g4?? instantly loses material to 7.♙b5+!, which is the reason White can play ♙e3 before f2-f3.

A) 6...a6

The 'Dragadorf' (Dragon-Najdorf hybrid) has been tested by some strong players and was the subject of a book by GM Simon Williams. It can also occur via 6...♙g7 and 7...a6 as discussed later.

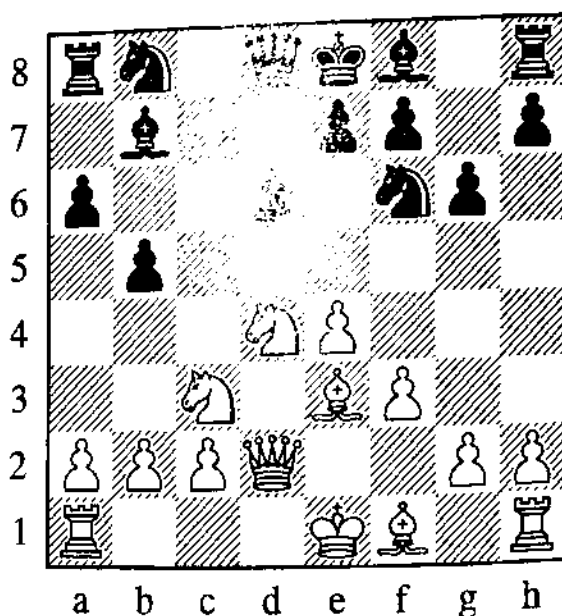
7.♙b5

A less accurate move order is: 7...♙bd7 8.♙d2 b5?! (Black should prefer 8...♙g7, transposing to variation B22 below)



9.a4! b4 10.♙a2 a5 11.c3 bxc3 12.♙xc3 White has a pleasant edge with good prospects on the queenside, Mannjoe – Deep UCI, engine game 2014.

8.♙d2 ♙b7



9.a4!

This is a typical weapon against Black's early ...b5. If White can obtain the pawn structure seen in the aforementioned engine game then he will almost certainly stand better, so we will focus on Black's attempts to prevent this from happening.

9...e5!?

This move order reduces White's options, as Williams points out.

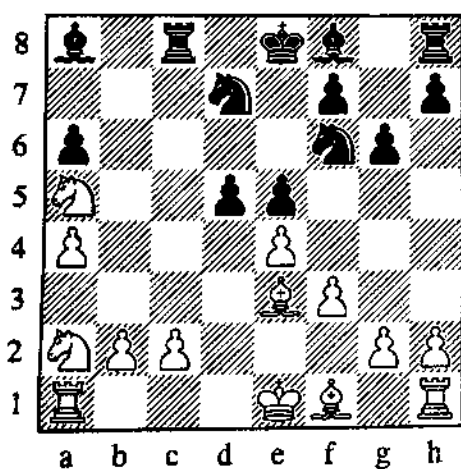
9...b4 10.♖a2 e5 11.♙xb4!?

11.♖b3 transposes to the main line below, but grabbing the pawn also looks good.

11...♙c8!?

An attempt to improve on 11...♙c7 12.♖b3 d5 13.♙c3 ♖c6 14.♙g5 d4 15.♙d2 ♙e7 as in Nataf – Gunnarsson, Reykjavik 2008, when 16.♙h6N would have favoured White. 12.♖b3 d5 13.♙c3 ♖bd7 14.♙xc8† ♙xc8 15.♖a5 ♙a8

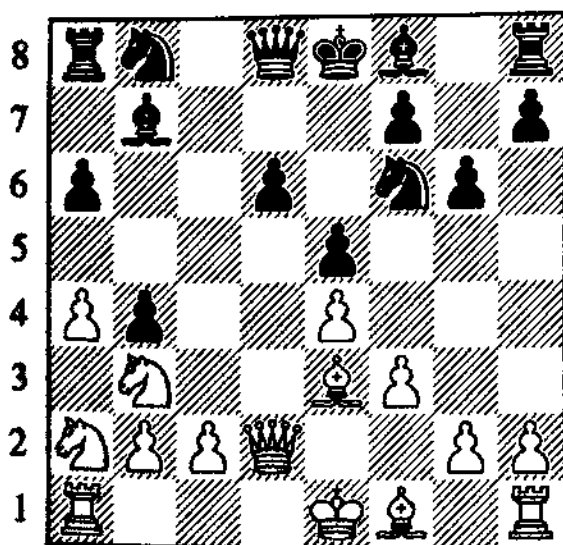
In Bruned – Jones, Dresden 2007, White should have played:



16.c3!N dxe4 17.♙xa6 ♙b8 18.♙b5 exf3 19.gxf3 ♙xf3 20.0-0

White is better, as pointed out by Williams.

10.♖b3 b4 11.♖a2



11...d5

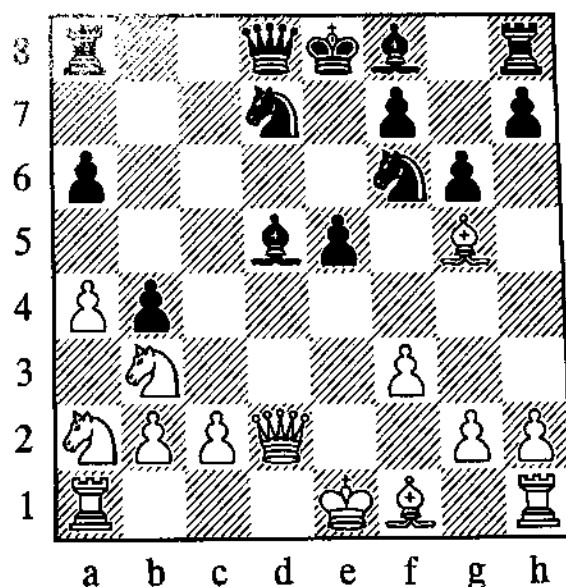
The idea of utilizing the bishop on f8 to maintain contact with the b4-square is one of the main ideas behind the 6...a6 move order. Still, the idea of advancing both central pawns while behind in development strikes me as too risky for Black.

11...a5?! 12.♙b5† ♖bd7 (12...♙c6 13.c4 also favours White, as Williams points out) 13.c3 d5 was played in Umudova – Gara, Porto Carras 2011, and now the simple 14.exd5N would have been crushing, as 14...♖xd5 15.♙d1 and 14...♙xd5 15.♙g5! both win material for White.

12.♙g5 ♖bd7 13.exd5 ♙xd5

13...h6 14.♙xf6 ♖xf6 15.♖xb4± Maslak – Fedorovsky, Pardubice 2010.

13...♙b6 14.0-0-0 ♙xd5 15.♖b1 ♙e7 16.♙h6± ♖c5? occurred in Dijkhuis – Kristensen, Ballerup 2015, when the simple 17.♖d4N would have been winning for White.



14.0-0-0!N

Williams only mentions the greedy 14.♖xb4? in his analysis, but White can do so much better.

Actually we have a pleasant choice, as we also have an easy route to a clearly better endgame: 14. ♖xd5! ♜xd5 15. ♙xd8 ♜xd8 (obviously not 15... ♙xd8 16. ♙xa6) 16. 0-0-0 ♜e3 17. ♙d3 was unpleasant for Black in Sax – Goh Wei Ming, Kecskemet 2011.

14... ♖b6

14...h6 15. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 16. ♜xb4±

15. ♜b1 ♙e7

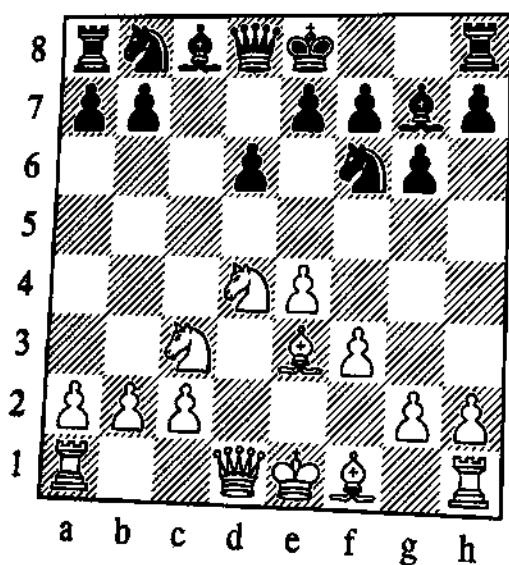
15... ♙g7? drops the b4-pawn.

15...h6 16. ♙e3 ♖b7 17. ♙d3 leaves Black stuck for a move.

16. ♙h6±

Black's position seems far too exposed.

B) 6... ♙g7 7. f3



Black's usual plan of development involves ...0-0 and ...♜c6, but a surprising number of players have tried the 'Dragadorf' approach involving an early ...a6 and ...b5. Sometimes Black even throws in ...h5 to hold back White's attack. Even though these ideas might seem bizarre, White needs to know what he's doing, because it's not so easy to launch an attack when Black hasn't castled. With little established theory, White may find it hard to

choose between the many available options. That explains why Jobava, Nakamura and other creative players have tested such ideas with Black.

We will consider B1) 7...h5, B2) 7...a6 and B3) 7...0-0.

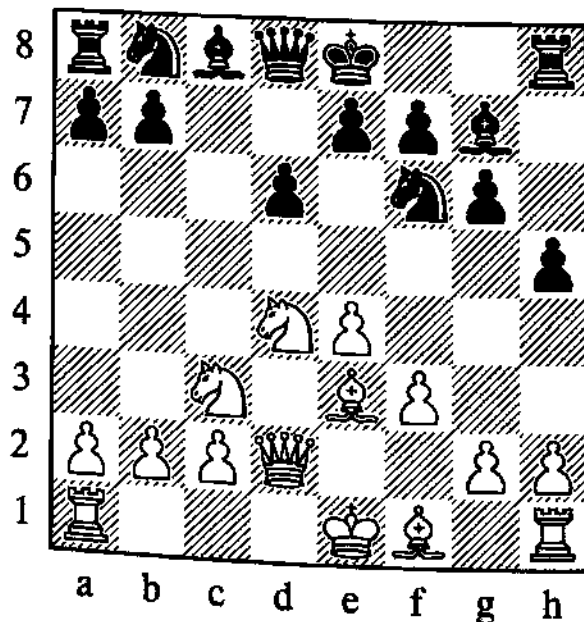
7...♜c6 8. ♖d2 usually transposes to the main lines after 8...0-0. Black has occasionally tried delaying castling with 8...♙d7 but I can't imagine why anyone would want to do that. It restricts Black's possibilities, as after 9.0-0-0 he cannot play ...d5. White can also just go for the normal set-up with 9. ♙c4, when I can't see anything better for Black than transposing to normal lines.

B1) 7...h5

Quite a few players have recently begun playing this move followed by ...a6 in order to prevent a quick g2-g4. However, as you will see in variation B2 below, I do not believe White should be so quick to push the g-pawn after ...a6, so the change in Black's move order does not affect us.

8. ♖d2

8. ♙e2!? intends to meet 8...a6 with 9.0-0, when ♖d2 isn't even required. However, Black can switch plans with 8...♜c6!? 9.0-0 0-0 intending ...d5.



**8...♖c6**

8...a6 leads to variation B21 below. 8...♖bd7 has been played by Jobava, but after 9.♗e2 a6 we once again reach variation B21.

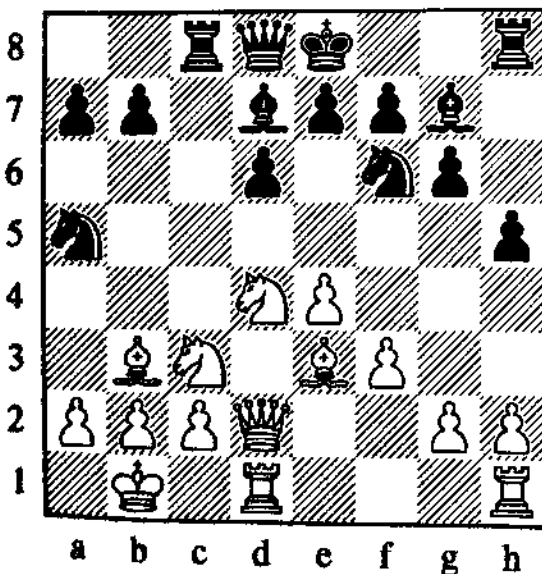
The text move introduces another kind of hybrid system, but it seems dubious to me. Black's only saving grace is that he has not yet castled and can try to do more creative things, but the following lines show that White has excellent prospects.

**9.♗c4**

9.0-0-0 also looks excellent for White. I have mainly chosen the text move because it ties in with our choice of 9.♗c4 (rather than 9.0-0-0) in the main line. The following game fragments contain plans and ideas that work well with the bishop on b3, and which you might find useful if you encounter some other weird sideline where Black delays castling.

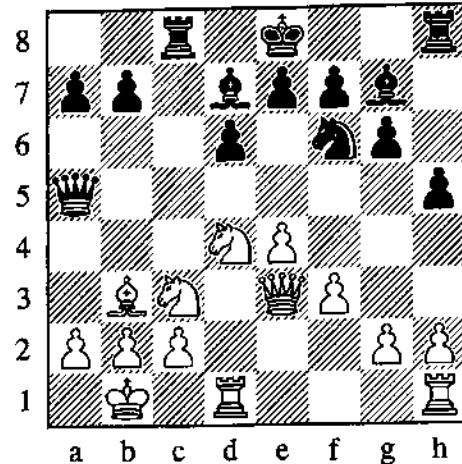
**9...♗d7 10.♗b3 ♝c8 11.0-0-0 ♖a5 12.♖b1**

It makes sense to tidy up the king's position before deciding on an active plan. It will be hard for Black to generate much of an attack with only one rook participating, and the weakening ...h5 move makes it risky for Black to castle.



**12...a6**

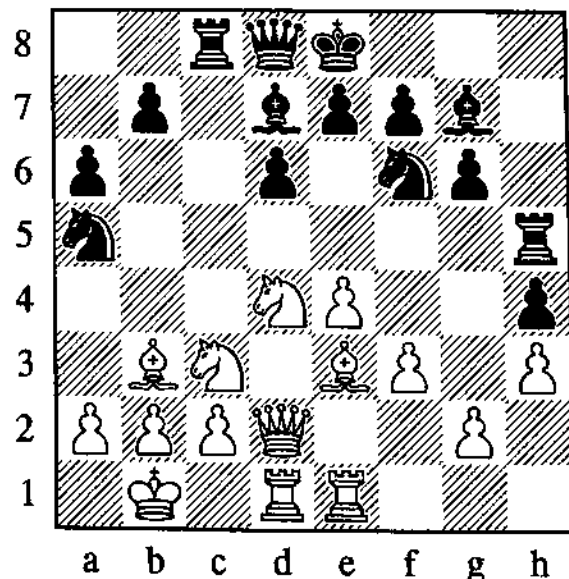
12...♖c4 is one of those rare cases when White can allow his dark-squared bishop to be exchanged for a mere knight: 13.♗d3!? ♖xe3 14.♗xe3 ♗a5 White was in no position to play ♗h6 anyway, and his pieces are well placed for a central attack.



15.h3! ♗c5 16.♗he1 0-0 17.f4 e5 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.♖f3 ♗xe3 20.♗xe3± Swiercz – Akshat, Golden Sands 2012.

**13.h3**

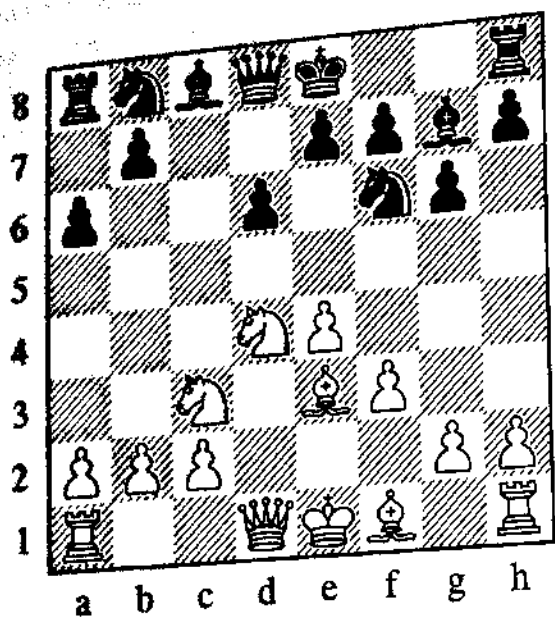
Preparing f3-f4 is a typical device in positions where Black refrains from castling.

**13...h4 14.♗he1 ♗h5**

15.♖de2 ♖c4 16.♗xc4 ♝xc4 17.b3 ♝c8 18.♖f4±

Khalifman – Shabalov, Moscow 2001.

## B2) 7...a6



## 8. ♖d2!

This flexible move order is best.

## 8. g4!?

This has been used by some strong players, but I think we should postpone it until Black has at least played ...♠bd7.

## 8...b5!

8...♠bd7?! gives White everything he wants. 9.h4! (9.a4!? b6 10.h4! was similarly strong in Bologan – Puntier Andujar, Tromsø 2014) 9...h5 Black had to do something about the threat of h4-h5, but now after 10.g5 ♠h7 the knight is awfully placed, and White was clearly better in Motylev – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

## 9. ♖d2 ♠b7 10.h4

10.0-0-0 h5!? 11.g5 ♠fd7∞ enabled Black to regroup his knights more favourably in Okrugin – Babaev, Tula 2007.

## 10...h5 11.g5 ♠fd7

Retreating the knight to d7 rather than h7 obviously helps Black, while the blocked state of the kingside might not be in White's favour. The game was double-edged in Frolyanov – Shukh, Irkutsk 2010.

Placing the queen on d2 is always useful. More importantly, we are waiting for Black

to determine his set-up. Against ...b5, we are ready to strike with a2-a4, planning to meet ...b4 with ♠a2 (forcing ...a5) and c2-c3, undermining Black's queenside and getting a nice outpost on b5. After carrying out this plan, White can calmly castle on the kingside and enjoy a positional edge.

In view of the above, most Dragadorf fans prefer to develop with ...♠bd7 before playing ...b5. However, as I mentioned in the note to White's last move, the g2-g4 plan becomes much stronger once the knight has gone to d7. In the event that the kingside becomes blocked with ...h5 and g4-g5, the fact that the knight must retreat to the ugly h7-square makes a huge difference.

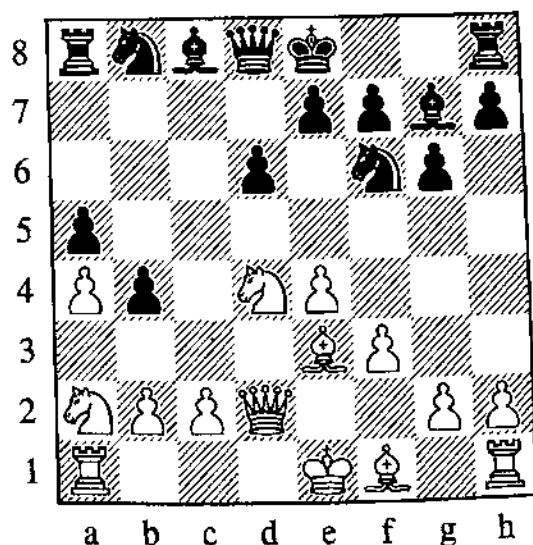
In view of the strength of the g2-g4 plan, some players have preferred a quick ...h5. In that case we can switch to a third set-up with ♠e2 and 0-0, leading to a pleasant middlegame where Black's king faces an uncertain future.

Let's analyse B21) 8...h5 and B22) 8...♠bd7 in turn.

## 8...b5

This allows White to carry out his standard plan, but there is an important detail at move 11.

## 9.a4 b4 10. ♠a2 a5



## 11. ♠b5!?

Forcing a slight misplacing of Black's pieces. 11.c3 bxc3 12. ♠xc3 0-0 13. ♠b5 ♠b7



14.♔d1 ♖a6 was decent for Black in Donskov – Solovjov, St Petersburg 2014.

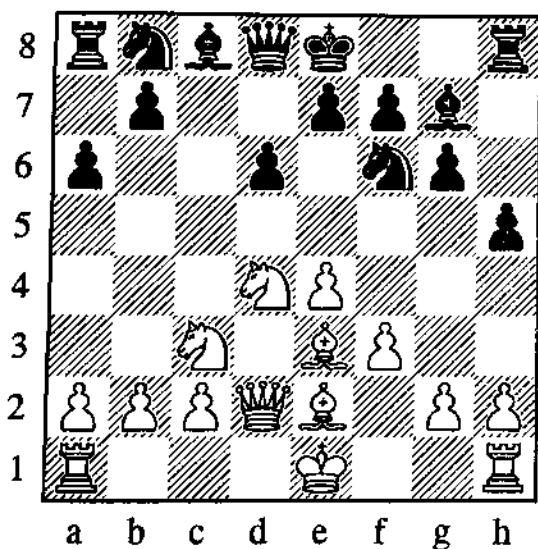
11...♗bd7

11...♔d7 12.c3 bxc3 13.♗xc3 0-0 14.0-0 ♖a6 15.♗c6 ♔xc6 16.♔xc6 ♖b8 17.♔b5 ♗c7 occurred in N. Robson – Wurschner, email 2002. I would prefer 18.♖fd1N± next, but White will keep an edge with any sensible move.

12.c3 bxc3 13.♗xc3 ♔b7 14.0-0 0-0 15.♗c6 ♔xc6 16.♔xc6 ♖c8 17.♔b5 ♗c5 18.♖ab1±

The bishop pair and future queenside passed pawn provided White with a solid edge in Galkin – Motylev, Novokuznetsk 2008.

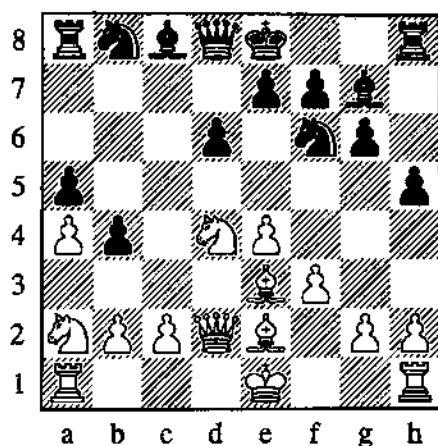
### B21) 8...h5 9.♔e2!



White simply intends to castle short and improve his position from there. His set-up might appear toothless, but Black's last move weakened his position significantly. Now White has the excellent g5-square for his bishop, which can be hugely annoying when combined with ♗d5 at an appropriate time. Moreover, a timely f4-f5 may cause serious headaches for Black's king in the future.

9...♗bd7

9...b5 can be met by 10.a4, leading to the usual excellent queenside structure. 10...b4 11.♗a2 a5

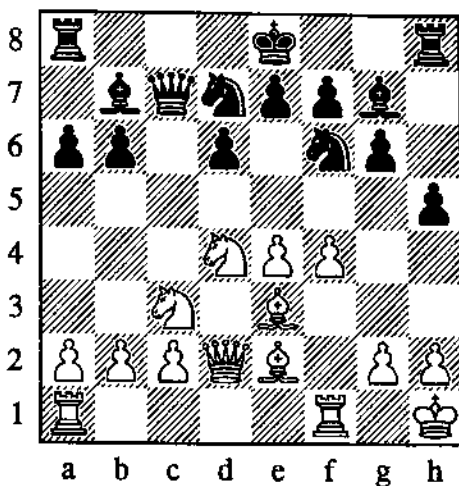


12.c3!? (12.♔b5† is promising here as well, as the extra ...h5 move brings no great benefit to Black. However, White can also try and exploit the fact that his bishop has already developed to e2.) 12...bxc3 13.♗xc3 0-0 14.0-0 ♔b7 15.♖fd1 ♖a6 16.♔b5± ♖c8?! 17.♗b3 ♖a8 18.♗a2± Shankland – Gareev, Saint Louis 2014.

10.a4!?

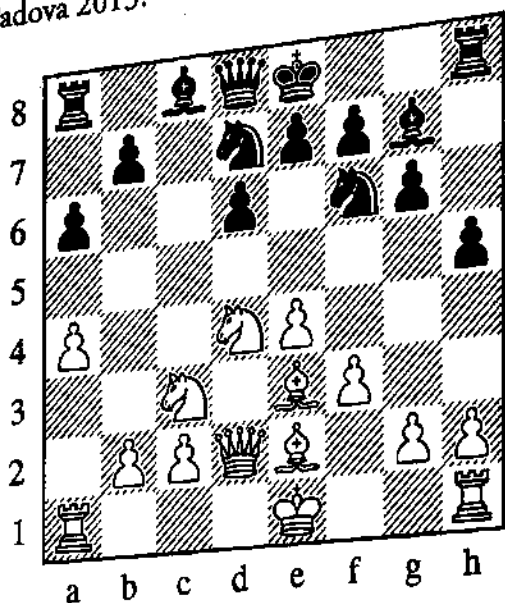
White has the luxury of being able to choose from more than one promising strategy. The ...a4 move aims for positional pressure with ♗b5 and ♗c4.

White can also go for a more kingside-oriented approach: 10.0-0 ♖c7 11.♗h1!? b6 (11...b5 allows the customary 12.a4 b4 13.♗a2 a5 14.c3±) 12.f4!? ♔b7



13.f5! gxf5? (13...♗xe4 14.♗xe4 ♔xe4 15.fxg6 ♔xg6 16.♖ael⌘) 14.♗xf5 ♔f8 15.♗d5 ♗xd5

16.exd5± Solodovnichenko – Mogranzini,  
Padova 2013.



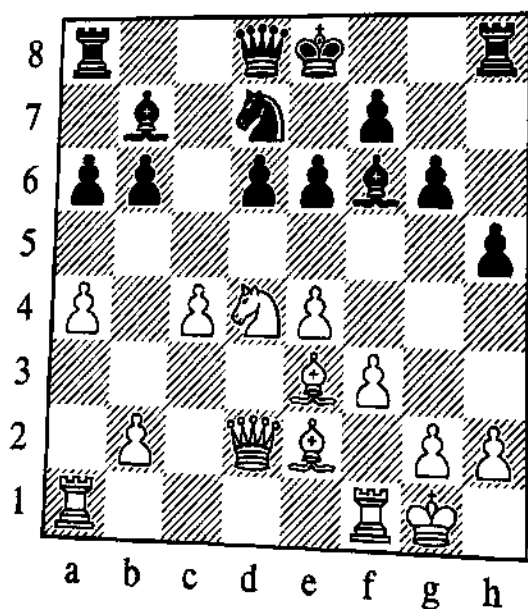
10...b6

In the event of 10...0-0 Black must reckon with 11.a5±.

11.♖d5 ♖b7

After 11...♖xd5 12.exd5 ♖b7 13.c4 0-0 14.0-0± White intends ♖g5 to step up the pressure on the e7-pawn, and the outpost on c6 is another long-term problem for Black.

12.c4 e6 13.♖xf6† ♖xf6 14.0-0

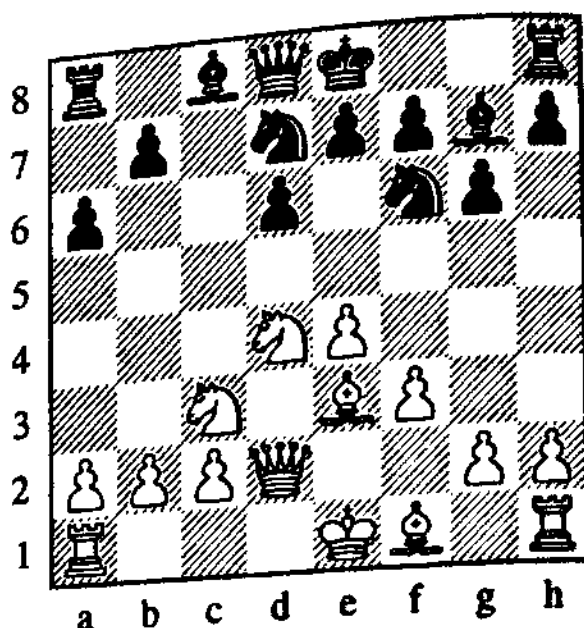


14...e5?!

This must be a mistake, but White is better anyway.

15.♖b3 ♖c5 16.♖xc5 dxc5 17.♖xd8† ♖xd8  
18.a5!±  
Navara – Kislinsky, Ostrava 2014.

B22) 8...♖bd7



9.g4!

As mentioned earlier, this move is most attractive when the b8-knight has gone to d7.

9.0-0-0 can be met by 9...b5? (9...b5 10.g4 might be troubling for Black, although the fact that White has determined his king position improves his chances compared to our main line.) This leads to a complex middlegame where White no longer has the positional plan involving short castling and a2-a4 as in the Navara game. 10.♖b1 b5 11.♖d3 ♖b7 12.♖he1 ♖c8 13.g3 0-0 14.h3 b4 15.♖ce2 e5 16.♖b3 d5 17.♖xb4 ♖c7± is a good illustration of how it might go, Andriasian – Zhigalko, Warsaw 2012.

9...b5 10.h4!

10.♖c6 ♖c7 11.♖xe7 looks tempting, but after the amazing 11...♖b7! 12.♖ed5 ♖xd5 13.♖xd5 ♖xd5 14.♖xd5 ♖c8 15.♖d1 ♖xb2 16.♖xd6 ♖e5 Black had good compensation in Kokarev – Sjogirov, St Petersburg 2009.

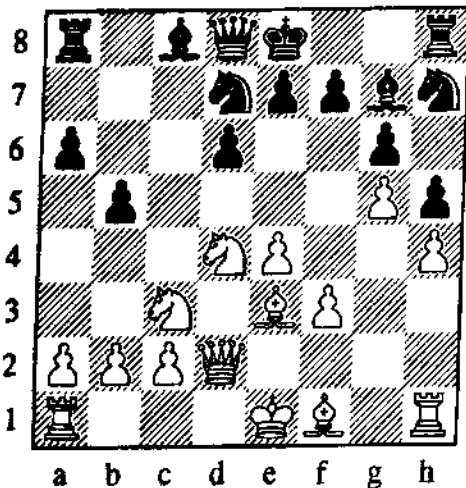
Khalifman recommends 10.g5 ♖h5 11.a4 bxa4 12.♞xa4 for White, which is discussed at length from Black's point of view by Williams. White may be able to claim a theoretical edge here, but his overextended kingside brings significant practical dangers. An important point is that the knight on h5 may cause trouble on the kingside after further piece exchanges.

The text move poses Black an awkward dilemma. If he allows h4-h5, he will find himself under unpleasant pressure on the kingside. If he prevents it with ...h5, then White gets to play g4-g5 under the best possible conditions: the knight is deprived of the d7- and h5-squares, and must instead settle for a miserable home on h7.

#### 10...b4

This seems like the best attempt to complicate the game.

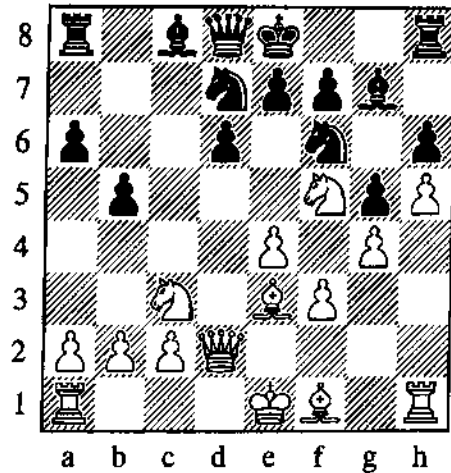
10...h5 has been the most common reply, but 11.g5 ♖h7 leaves the knight on an awful square. The most convincing continuation is:



12.f4! ♜b7 13.f5 Black does not have a good answer to this simple plan. 13...♖e5 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.♖d5 ♜c8 16.♖f4± Motylev – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

10...h6 11.h5 g5 blocks the kingside in a different way, but it gives our knight a huge

outpost: 12.♖f5 (12.a4 b4 13.♖a2 ♖e5! 14.♖xb4 ♜b7 15.♖d3 ♖c4 16.♞e2 ♖xe3 17.♞xe3 e6 was not so clear in Baron – Yilmazyerli, Baku 2014)



12...♖e5!N An amazing idea, but not quite enough to equalize. 13.♖xg7† ♜f8 14.♜e2 ♜xg7 15.♞g1 With f3-f4 coming next, White's initiative is powerful.

#### 10...♜b7

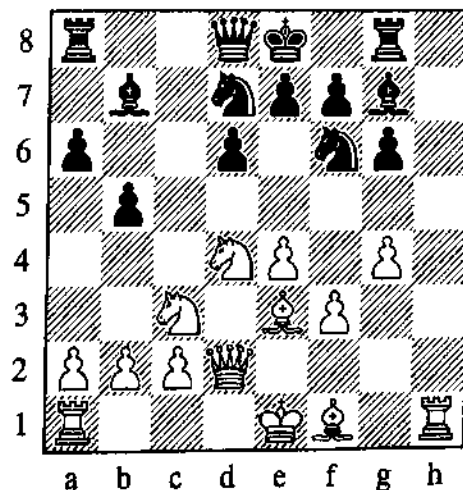
This just allows White unchallenged play on the kingside.

#### 11.h5 ♞g8

11...b4 12.♖ce2 e5 13.♖b3 d5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♞xh8† ♜xh8 16.♞xb4± Palac – Romero Holmes, Arvier 2008.

11...d5 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♞xh8† ♜xh8 14.e5! ♖xe5 15.♞h2± Sulskis – Volodin, Tallinn 2008.

#### 12.hxg6 hxg6



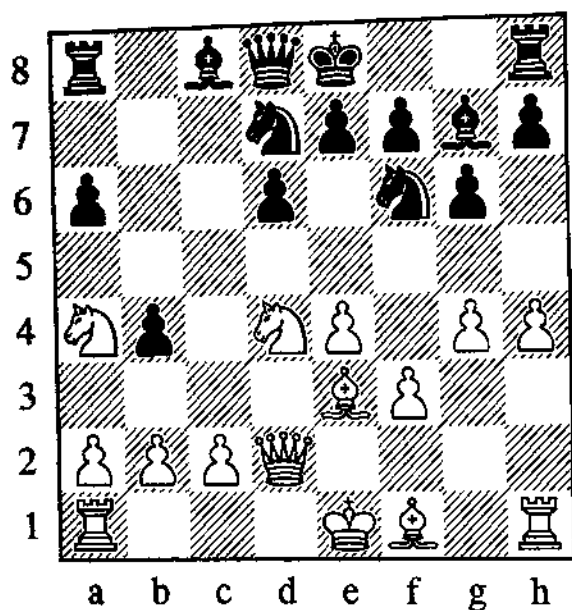
13.0-0-0 ♞c8 14.g5 ♖h5 15.♜h3 ♞c4

16.♖d5 ♖e5 17.b3±

Akopian – Romero Holmes, Cala Mayor 2008.

11.♖a4!

11.♖ce2 ♖e5! creates typical Najdorf-like complications: 12.♙f2 (12.h5N ♖c4∞) 12...0-0 13.♙xb4 a5 14.♙a3 ♙a6∞ Balutescu – Genga, corr. 2012.



11...♙a5

This is the only way to exploit the knight on a4.

11...♙b7 was played in Kryvoruchko – Shanava, Olomouc 2006. Instead of being distracted by the b4-pawn, White should have played 12.h5!N with a clear advantage.

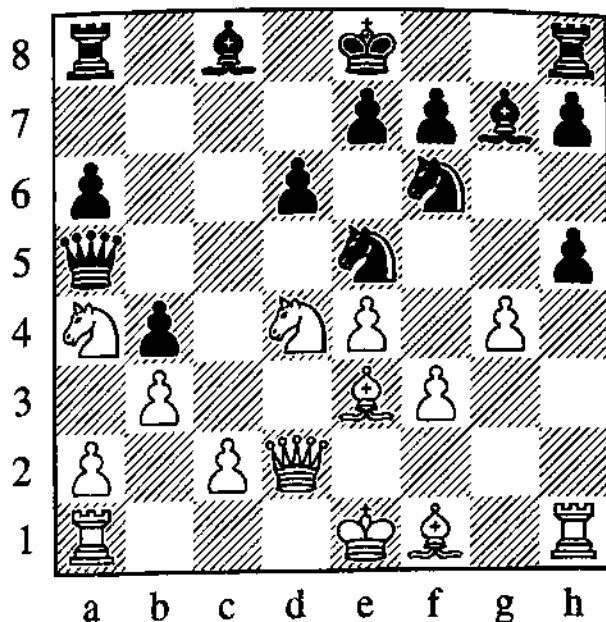
12.b3 ♖e5 13.h5!

13.♙e2!N is the computer's suggestion, but it feels rather out of place, and I don't like the idea of ...♙xg4 hanging over my head.

Players who don't want to allow any crazy-looking sacrifices might prefer 13.♙g2!N, which leads to an interesting position after 13...♖c4 14.bxc4 ♙xa4 15.h5. It is hard to assess this, but it seems to me that White's kingside initiative is more significant than his damaged structure.

13...gxh5

13...♖xf3†N 14.♖xf3 ♖xe4 15.♙d3 ♙xa1 16.♙xe4 ♙b8 17.♙c4 gives White fantastic piece activity.

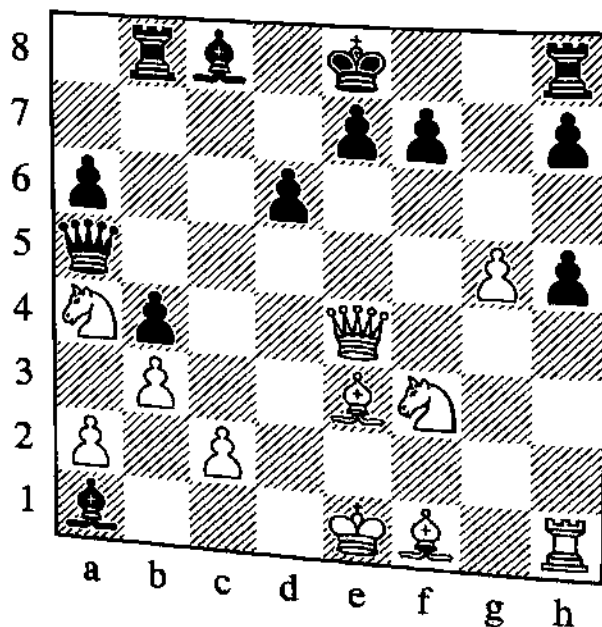


14.g5!N

This is not the only good move, but it seems to me to be the clearest route to an advantage.

After 14.gxh5 ♖xf3† 15.♖xf3 ♖xe4 16.♙d3 ♙xa1 17.♙xe4 ♙b8 18.♙d3 Black went on to hold a draw in Efanov – Sergeev, email 2010, but White was pressing for most of the game. In a practical game especially, I would prefer White's active minor pieces.

14...♖xf3† 15.♖xf3 ♖xe4 16.♙d3 ♙xa1 17.♙xe4 ♙b8

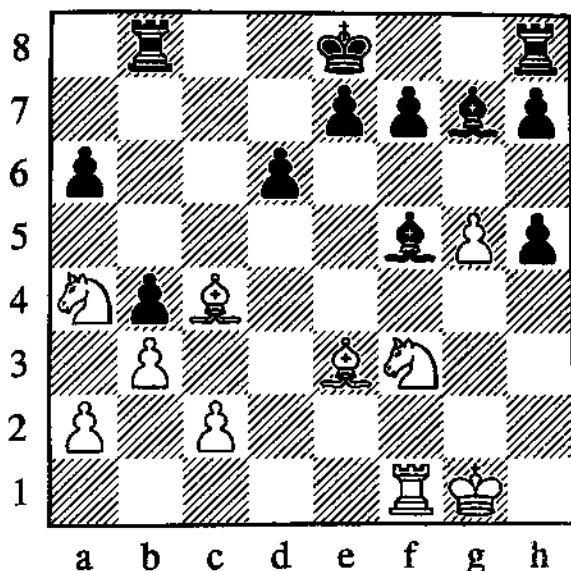


### 18. ♖c4! ♗f5

18... ♖b7 19. ♗f4 e6 (19... ♖d5 20. ♖b6!±)  
20. ♗xd6±

### 19. ♗xf5 ♖xf5 20. 0-0 ♖g7

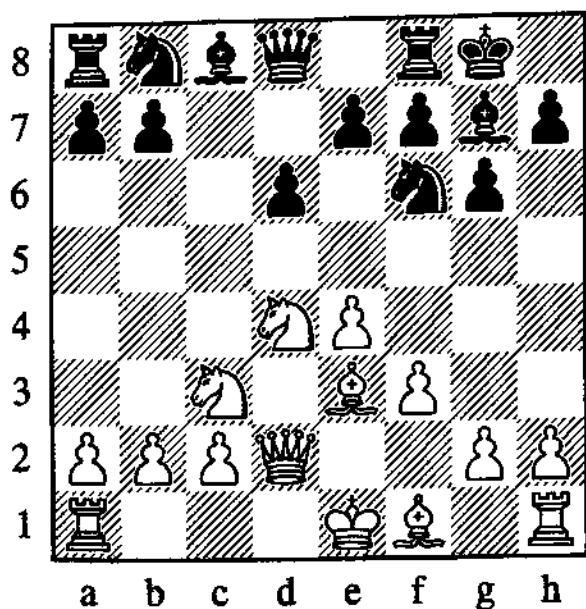
Ordinarily, Black would have been doing well in this endgame due to the sheer number of pawns, but he isn't able to keep all of them due to a forcing continuation:



21. ♖d4! ♖g6 22. ♖c6 ♖c8 23. ♖xb4±

### B3) 7... 0-0 8. ♗d2

You can certainly force yourself to play the Accelerated Dragon with 8. ♖c4 ♖c6 9. ♖b3 if you wish, but it needlessly gives Black extra options.



### 8... ♖c6

As always, the database contains a list of obscure alternatives, but I don't see anything worth spending time on.

### 9. ♖c4 ♖d7

In the remainder of this chapter I will focus on this interesting sideline after a brief summary of the alternatives:

9... ♖d7 is the main line, and will be examined thoroughly in Chapters 2-5.

9... ♖xd4 10. ♖xd4 ♖e6 can be met by 11. ♖b3, which transposes to a line analysed via the Accelerated Dragon – see variation B of Chapter 9 on page 123. The present move order gives White the interesting additional option of 11. ♖xe6, but I don't see any special need to analyse it.

9... a6 seems rather pointless and is hardly ever seen in tournament play, but it has done surprisingly okay in correspondence games, mostly because some White players appear to lose their way in the myriad move-order options. The simplest solution is 10. ♖b3 (or 10. 0-0-0 followed by ♖b3), which transposes to a line covered on page 119 of Chapter 9.

9... ♖a5 has been played a few times. The simplest answer is 10. ♖b3 with a transposition to variation A of Chapter 9 on page 119. 10. ♖e2!? is another interesting option which could be explored.

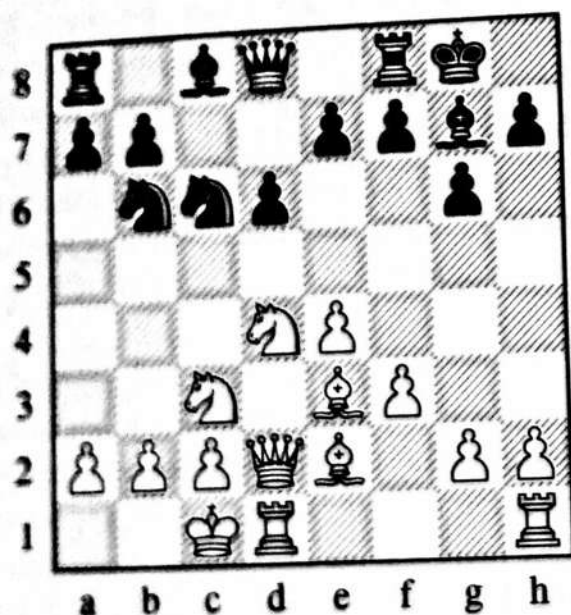
Let's now turn our attention to the more serious business of 9... ♖d7. As a kid, I remember thinking of this as an extremely elegant idea: Black intends ... ♖b6, ... ♖a5 and ... ♖bc4, which may enable him to eliminate both of the white bishops. Despite this variation's lack of popularity among GMs in recent years, White's best response has only rarely been



played. White's most common plan involves  $\text{f3}$  and  $\text{d3}$  in order to avoid ... $\text{c4}$ , but to me this seems like a counter-intuitive scheme which justifies Black's set-up.

10.0-0-0  $\text{b6}$  11. $\text{e2}$ !

11. $\text{f3}$  is certainly possible, but I don't want to go into knee-deep complications in every offbeat line. Besides, I consider the text move a tougher challenge to Black's set-up. The idea is to preserve the option of  $\text{b2-b3}$  to counter Black's plan of landing a knight on  $\text{c4}$ .



11... $\text{d5}$

11... $\text{a5}$  has been played a few times, but after 12. $\text{b3}$ ± I have no idea what Black plans to do with either of his knights.

It's a similar story after:

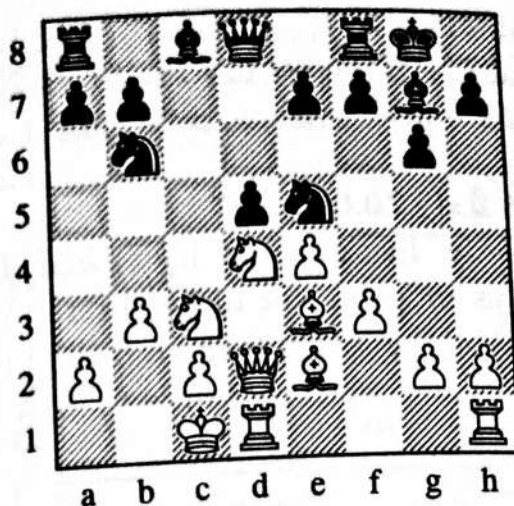
11... $\text{e5}$  12. $\text{b3}$

This time at least the knight on  $\text{e5}$  is more sensibly placed, but it is still hard for Black to justify the time spent moving his knights. White's last move weakened his queenside a little, but his standard attack with  $\text{h4-h5}$  will come a lot faster than Black's counterplay.

12... $\text{d5}$

12... $\text{d7}$  13. $\text{h4}$   $\text{a6}$  (13... $\text{h5}$  14. $\text{g4}$  is just too easy; 13... $\text{c8}$  14. $\text{h5}$ ±) 14. $\text{h5}$ ±

12... $\text{a5}$  13. $\text{a4}$  does not change much.



13. $\text{db5}$

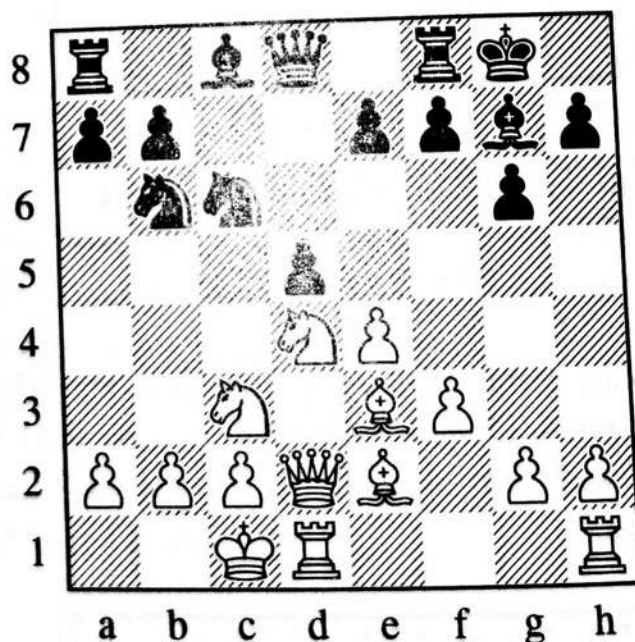
There are other good moves, but I don't see any special need to improve White's play.

13... $\text{e6}$

13... $\text{a6}$  14. $\text{xb6}$   $\text{xb6}$  15. $\text{xd5}$  and the queen has no good squares.

14. $\text{exd5}$   $\text{xd5}$  15. $\text{xd5}$   $\text{exd5}$  16. $\text{d4}$ ±

Ramesh – Konguvel, India 1999.

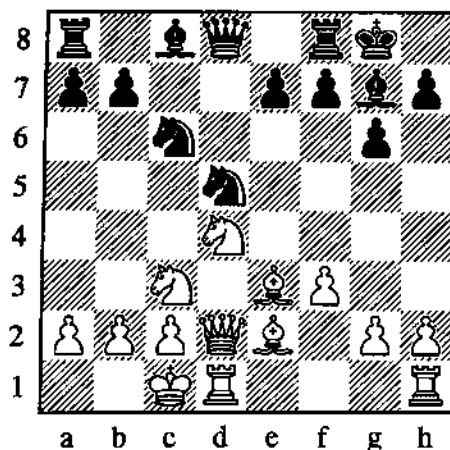


The text move is the only critical try, but White has more than one good way to meet it. I will present **B31)** 12. $\text{b1}$  and **B32)** 12. $\text{h4}$ !±.

12. $\text{db5}$   $\text{a6}$ !N (12... $\text{e6}$  13. $\text{g5}$   $\text{f6}$  14. $\text{e3}$ ± Nisipeanu – Jianu, Mamaia 2012) 13. $\text{xb6}$   $\text{xb6}$  14. $\text{xd5}$   $\text{d8}$  gives Black excellent compensation.

An interesting alternative is:  
12. $\text{exd5}$   $\text{xd5}$

White has a slightly improved version of a well-known variation (reached after 9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 ♖xd5) with the bishop on e2 instead of f1. Surprisingly, the extra tempo is not as big an advantage as you might think, and in some lines White may even have to watch out for ...♟f4, gaining time by hitting the bishop. I will just mention a few brief points.



13. ♟xc6 bxc6 14. ♟d4

14. ♟xd5 cxd5 15. ♖xd5 might be enough for a theoretical edge due to the extra tempo, but pawn-grabbing is a risky business. After 15...♟b8!? 16.b3 ♖e8! (but not 16...♖c7 17.♖c5±) the position seems pretty unclear to me.

14...♟d4 15. ♖xd4 ♖b6 16. ♟a4

Now both 16...♖c7 and 16...♖a5 would need to be considered. There may well be a precise way to take advantage of the bishop's placement on e2 instead of f1. However, unless your repertoire already includes 9.0-0-0, I would advise you to stick with one of the lines covered below.

### B31) 12. ♟b1

This move sees White borrow a different idea from the 9.0-0-0 d5 variation.

#### 12...♟b8

12...dxe4?? loses to 13. ♟xc6 ♖xd2 14. ♟xe7+.

12...♟d4N 13. ♟xd4 dxe4 14. ♖e3!? is pleasant for White.

12...♟d4!?N 13. ♟xd4 dxe4 reduces White's options slightly, but 14. ♟xe4 leads to a favourable endgame (assuming Black exchanges on d4) all the same. The placement of Black's knight on b6 instead of f6 does not help him in any of these lines.

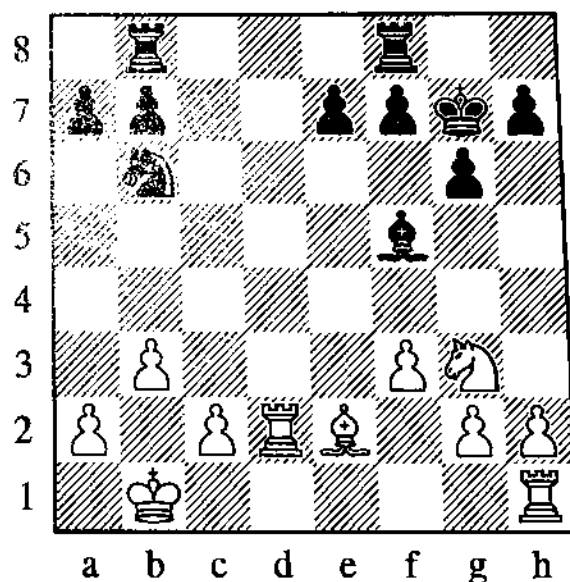
#### 13.b3!?

Black's last move anticipated an exchange on c6. Rather than oblige him, we will cover the c4-square while blunting any future attack along the b-file.

#### 13...♟d4

13...e5? is an unsound sacrifice, as after 14. ♟xc6 bxc6 15.exd5 cxd5 16. ♟xd5± the e5-pawn blocks Black's counterplay.

14. ♟xd4 dxe4 15. ♟xe4 ♟f5 16. ♟xg7 ♖xd2 17. ♖xd2 ♟xg7 18. ♟g3



#### 18...♟d7N

18...♟e6 19. ♖hd1 gave White a pleasant endgame which he converted to victory in Motylev – Mamedov, Warsaw 2005.

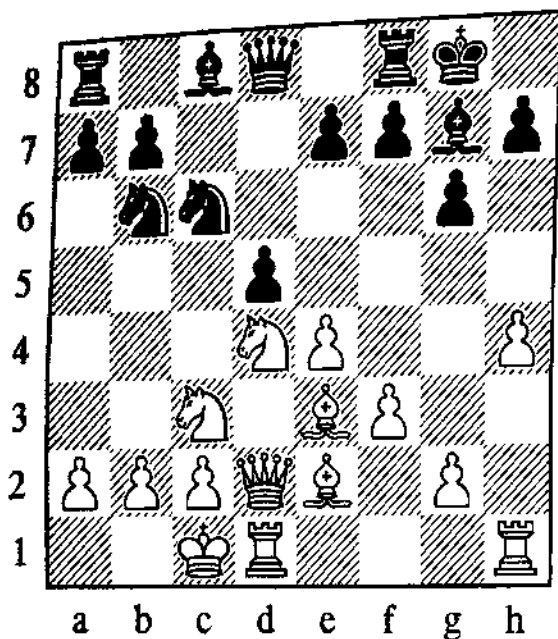
18...♟fd8 is positionally risky: 19. ♟xf5+ (19. ♖hd1 ♖xd2 20. ♖xd2 ♟e6 21.c4± is also fine

of course) 19...gxf3 20.♖hd1 ♖xd2 21.♖xd2 f4  
(21...♗f6 22.f4±/±) 22.♖d4 e5 23.♖d6±

The text move seems like the best try, but  
White keeps a pleasant endgame edge.

19.♖hd1 ♗c6 20.♗b2±

B32) 12.h4!?



This also looks promising, although it gives  
Black a bit more freedom to choose between  
simplifications and a complex middlegame.  
Still, I have not found equality for him in  
either scenario.

12...♖a5!±N

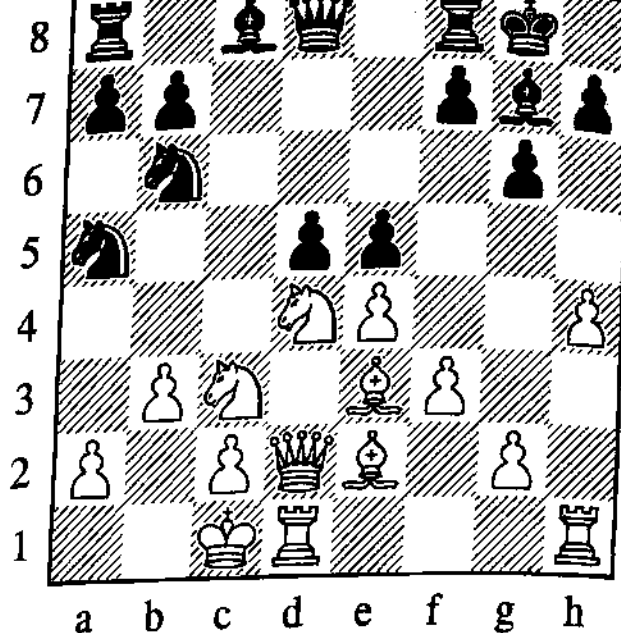
This seems like the most critical reply.

12...♖e5N could be considered, although  
13.b3 looks good for White.

12...♗xd4N 13.♗xd4 dxe4 14.♖e3 exf3  
15.gxf3 gives White a promising attack.

12...dxe4 13.♖xc6 ♖xd2± occurred in  
Savchenko – Mamedov, Internet (blitz) 2006.  
I propose 14.♗xd2N bxc6 15.♖xe4± with a  
positional edge for White.

13.b3 e5



14.exd5! exd4 15.♗xd4

White has two pawns and a strong initiative  
for the sacrificed piece.

## Conclusion

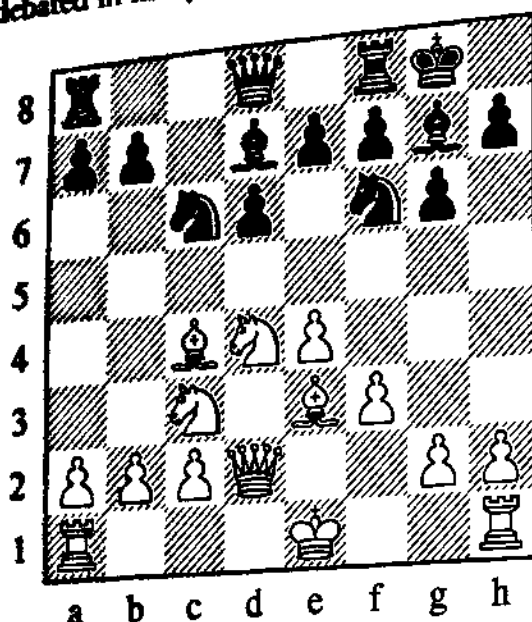
The 'Dragadorf' should be studied carefully,  
as the correct plan will depend on how Black  
develops. A quick ...b5 should be hit by  
a2-a4, and if the ♖8-knight goes to d7 then  
g2-g4 followed by ♖g4-h4 is the order of the  
day. If Black pre-empted this plan by playing  
...h5 himself, then White can switch plans and  
castle on the kingside.

We finished the chapter by considering the  
9...♖d7 variation against the Yugoslav Attack.  
I like the idea of meeting ...♖b6 with ♗e2,  
maintaining the option of b2-b3 to prevent an  
invasion on c4. The fact that this plan has been  
far less popular than the ♗b3 plan only adds to  
its effectiveness as a practical weapon.



1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6  
5.Qc3 g6 6.Bc3 Bg7 7.B3 0-0 8.Bd2 Qc6  
9.Qc4 Bd7

Developing the bishop is Black's usual choice, reaching a position that has been debated in many thousands of games.



### 10.0-0-0

10.h4!? is an alternative move order. Normally, it leads to the heavily analysed Soltis Variation after 10...h5 11.0-0-0 Qe5! (11...Bc8 12.Qxc6!?) 12.Bb3 Bc8, which falls outside of our repertoire.

Against 10...h5 we can also play the unusual 11.Bb3!?, intending a quick g2-g4. This is analysed rather extensively under the Accelerated Dragon move order in variation B of Chapter 11 on page 149. Although this is an interesting try for White, I am not sure if we ought to force Black to go there when we still have the option of playing a normal Yugoslav Attack.

Moreover, Black can throw us off course with 10...Bc8! 11.Bb3 Qe5, when 12.0-0-0 h5 once again transposes to the Soltis Variation. The ambitious 12.h5!? Qxh5 leads to messy complications after 13.g4 (or 13.0-0-0 Qg3!?) when Black has all sorts of options available.

In this chapter we will analyse A) 10...Bb8 and B) 10...Bb8.

10...Bc8 is the normal move, which will be covered in the next three chapters.

10...Qe5 11.Bb3 leaves Black with nothing better than transposing to normal lines with 11...Bc8 or 11...Bb8.

10...Qa5 sometimes leads to the Chinese Dragon as covered in variation B below. However, this move order gives White the extra option of 11.Qe2! when ...b5 is harder to carry out. Black will have to switch plans with 11...Bc8 followed by ...Qc4, as covered later in Chapter 5.

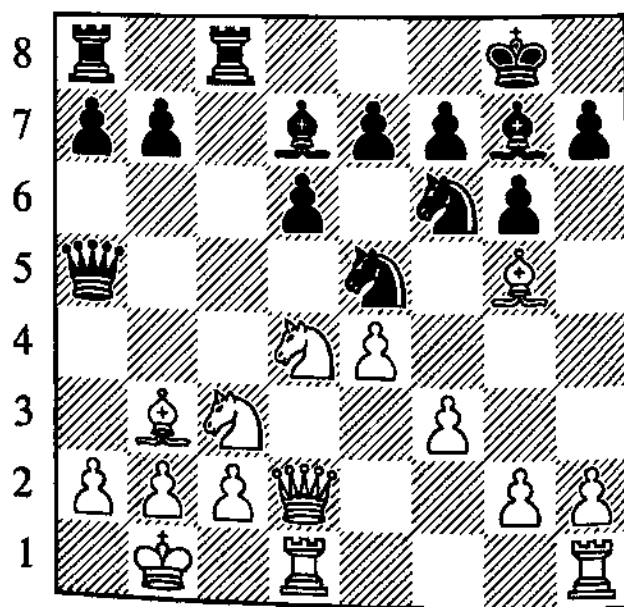
### A) 10...Bb8

This used to be a popular line, but in recent times Black has pretty much abandoned it as White seems to have several promising continuations. Still you need to be aware of some key ideas.

### 11.Bb3 Bfc8 12.Qb1 Qe5 13.Qg5!?

This slightly unusual move causes interesting problems and has achieved a heavy practical score.

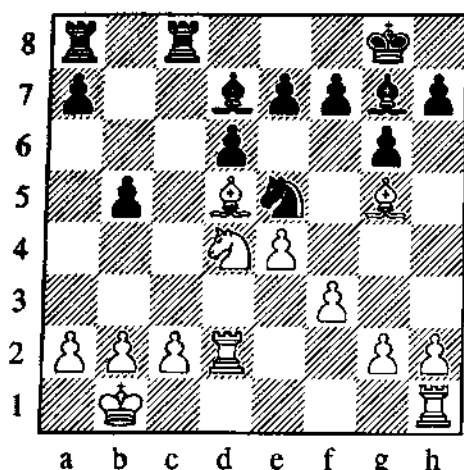
13.h4 is the main line. Although White is doing well there too, Black has a lot more options that we would need to consider.



**13...♘c4**

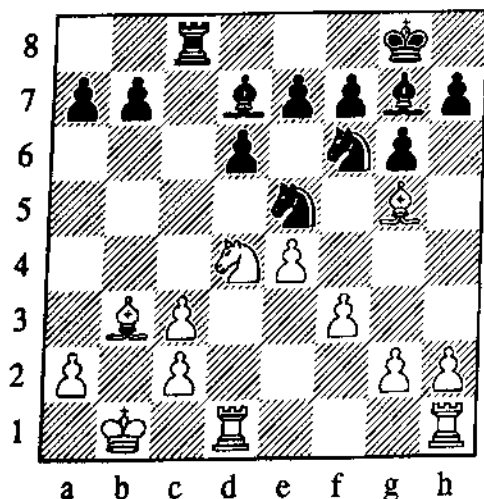
Here are a few other lines to illustrate White's main ideas.

13...b5?! 14.♘d5! ♜xd2 15.♞xd2 ♘xd5 16.♙xd5 wins material. One example continued:



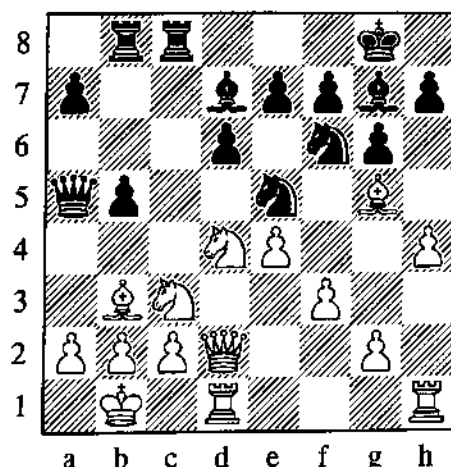
16...♘c4 17.♞d3 ♜ab8 18.♙xe7 a5 19.♙g5 a4 20.♙f4 ♜b6 21.♞hd1 a3 22.♙xc4 bxc4 23.♞xa3 c3 24.♞b3+ Golubev – Raeber, Scuol 2001.

13...♞xc3 14.♜xc3 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♞c8 is a thematic sacrifice, but this is not a good version for Black.



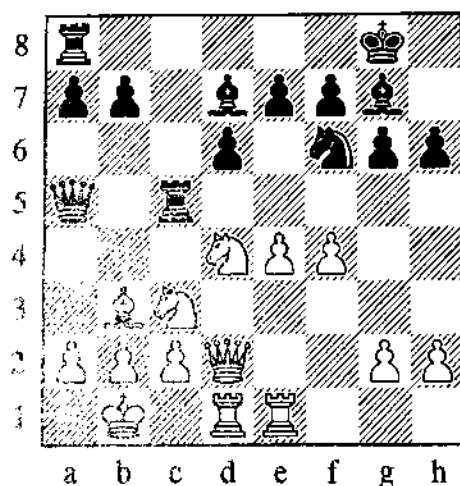
16.♞he1! Intending a quick f3-f4 and e4-e5 to open files for our rooks. 16...h6 17.♙c1 ♞xc3 18.f4 ♘c6 19.e5 ♘xd4 20.♞xd4 ♘e8 21.♞d2 ♙f8 22.♙b2 ♞c7 23.♞e3± Guseinov – Verkasalo, Patras 2001.

13...♜ab8 14.h4 b5 (14...♘c4 15.♙xc4 ♞xc4 16.♘b3 ♜e5 17.♞he1N leaves the black queen in trouble)



15.♙xf6! ♙xf6 16.♘d5 ♜xd2 17.♞xd2 ♙g7 18.h5 White keeps an edge, and 18...g5? only makes things worse after 19.h6± as in J. Fernandez – Serrano, Cienfuegos 1975.

13...♞c5 14.f4!? (14.♞he1!? is another critical move) 14...♘eg4 15.♞he1 h6 16.♙xf6 ♘xf6



17.e5! dxe5 18.♙xf7+! ♙xf7 19.♘b3± Grabarczyk – Lutz, Germany 2006.

14.♙xc4 ♞xc4 15.♘b3 ♜e5

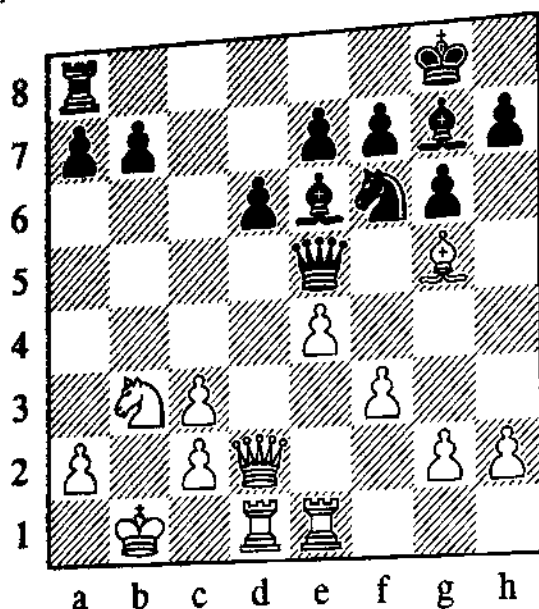
15...♜d8? 16.e5! is horrible for Black.

15...♜a6 16.♙xf6 (Simplest, although 16.e5 is also promising) 16...♙xf6 17.♘d5± Moles – Vujacic, Groningen 1969.

16.♞he1 ♞xc3!?

16...♗c6 gives White a pleasant choice between 17.f4 and 17.♗f4, with some initiative in both cases. The text has been by far the most popular choice, having occurred in more than thirty games.

17.bxc3 ♗e6



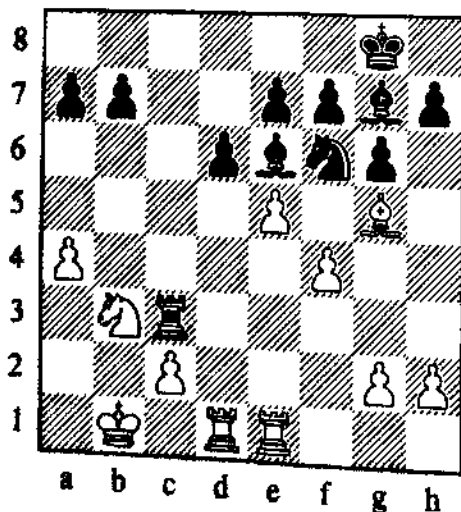
18.a4!

Going after the queen! If White does not force the issue then Black may count on decent compensation in the middlegame, especially if he finds time for ...♗d7-b6.

18.♗e3 ♗c8 19.♗d4 ♗b5 20.♖a1 ♗a4 worked out okay for Black in Ree – Tal, Wijk aan Zee 1973.

18...♗c4

18...♗c8 19.f4!? ♗xc3 20.♗xc3 ♗xc3 21.e5 also favours White:



21...♗d7 (21...♗d5? Mrva – Kukel, Trencianske Teplice 2005. 22.exd6!N exd6 23.♗xd5+–) 22.♗xe7 dxe5 23.fxe5± D. Parr – C. Barnes, Lone Pine 1975.

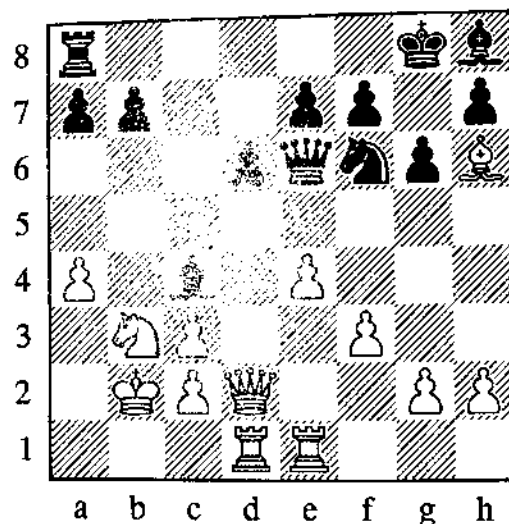
19.♗b2!

19.f4 ♗e6 20.e5 ♗d5! is not so clear, so White improves his position first.

19...♗c8

19...♗d7N runs into 20.f4 ♗e6 21.♗d4 and Black is forced to give up the dark-squared bishop.

A crucial line is 19...♗e6!?N 20.♗h6! with the point that 20...♗h8? is impossible. (20...b5 is the lesser evil, but after the bishop exchange White has much less to worry about: 21.♗xg7 ♗xg7 22.axb5 ♗b8 23.♗a1 ♗xb5 24.♗a5±)



21.e5! ♗d5 22.♗a5 ♗b6 23.exd6 White is winning.

20.f4 ♗e6 21.f5!

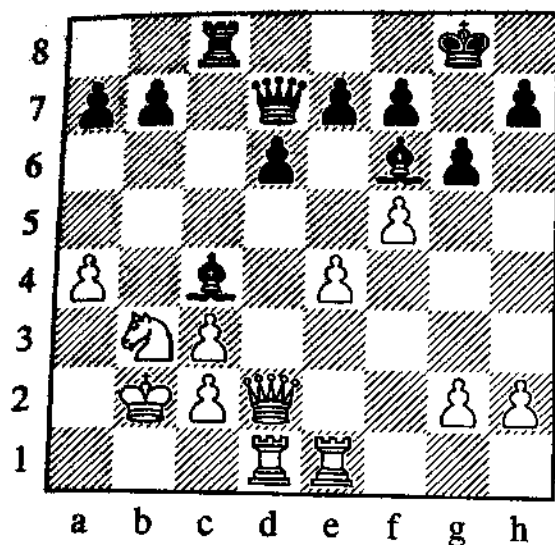
21.e5 ♗d5!∞

21...♗d7

21...gxf5? 22.♗d4 ♗d7 23.♗xf5 ♗xa4 24.♗a1 ♗b5† 25.♗c1 wins.

22.♗xf6 ♗xf6

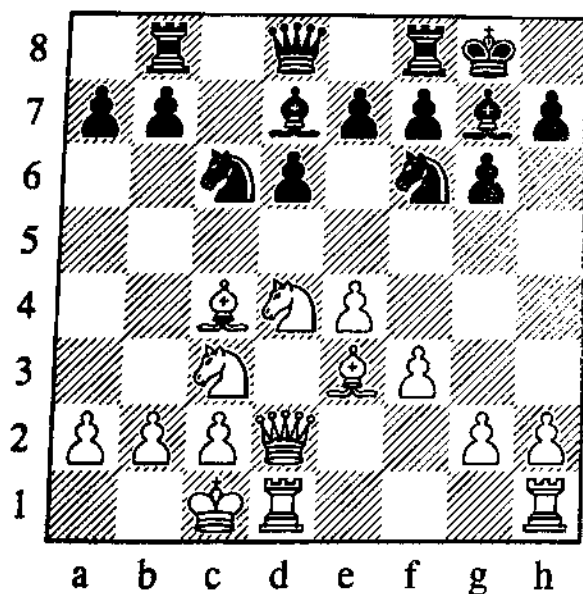
22...exf6 23.♗xd6 is no good for Black.



23.e5 ♗h8 24.f6!

Black had serious problems in Van Willigen – Smirnovs, email 2010, with a material deficit and the bishop completely shut out of play on h8.

### B) 10...♗b8



This is known as the Chinese Dragon. The idea is obvious – Black is ready to attack with ...b5, followed by either ...b4 or ...♗e5-c4. If White removes the knight on c4 then Black will be able to open the b-file, while also achieving his main aim of eliminating the light-squared bishop.

### 11.♗b3

Black was already threatening ...b5.

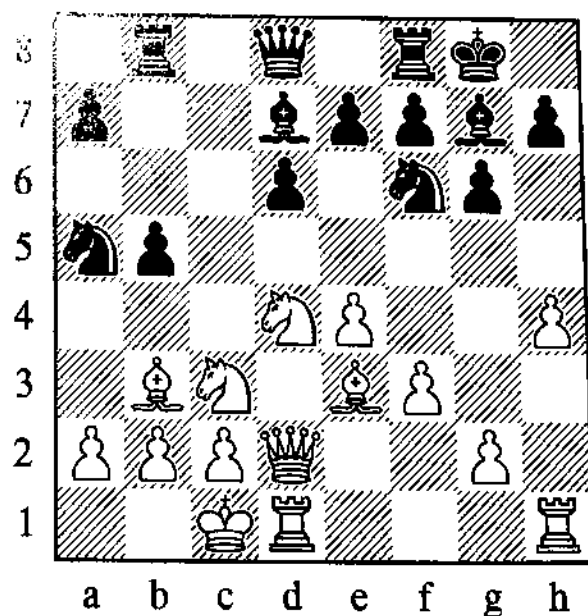
11.h4 b5! 12.♗cxb5 ♗a5 13.♗a3 is playable, but it seems to me that White is losing touch with his priorities.

### 11...♗a5 12.h4

12.♗h6 has been more common but it invites Black to exchange bishops and play ...e5 at some point. This plan will be less appealing for Black if his bishop remains on g7, although we should still watch out for it.

### 12...b5

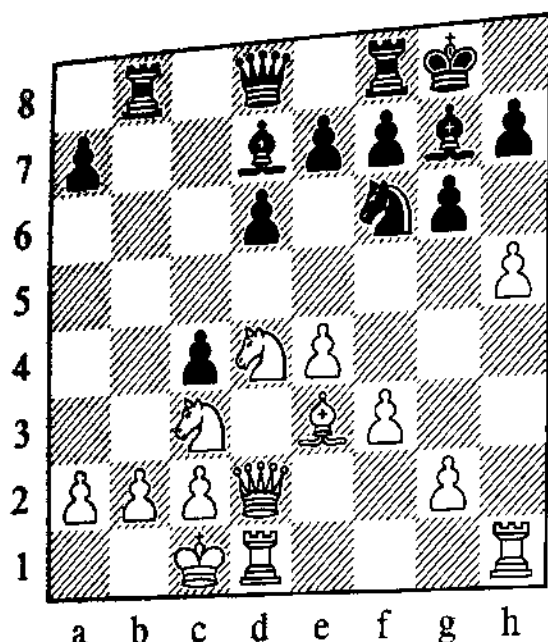
Black's usual plan involves ...♗c4, when the exchange on c4 will open the b-file. He will then play ...♗b6 to provoke a weakening on the queenside. In an ideal world, White would like to progress his kingside attack while also making time for ♖b1-a1, which would enable him to defend his queenside without resorting to the weakening b2-b3. In that case it would be easy to defend against the threats on b2, and Black's attack may become surprisingly stuck. The problem is that an early ♖b1 will give Black time to play ...h5, when it becomes harder for White to generate an attack as well.



My main idea is based on a line after B1) 13.h5, so it makes sense to consider that move before looking at the more subtle B2) 13.♗b1.

13.g4 e5! can be compared with the note to Black's 13th move in variation B2. 14.♖de2 b4 15.♖d5 ♖xb3† 16.axb3 ♖xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗e6 18.♗xd6 ♗a5! The decision to go for g2-g4 instead of ♖b1 proves costly for White.

B1) 13.h5 ♖c4 14.♗xc4 bxc4



The critical position, where I analysed two main moves.

### 15.♖b1!

Restricting Black's counterplay seems best, although Black has decent defensive chances in the endgame that may ensue.

Vigorito focuses on 15.♗h6 which is also interesting, although 15...♗b6 16.b3 ♗xh6 17.♗xh6 ♗a5 18.♖b2 ♖fc8 19.♗e3 ♗e5 was okay for Black in Draganic – Sebenik, Sarajevo 2014.

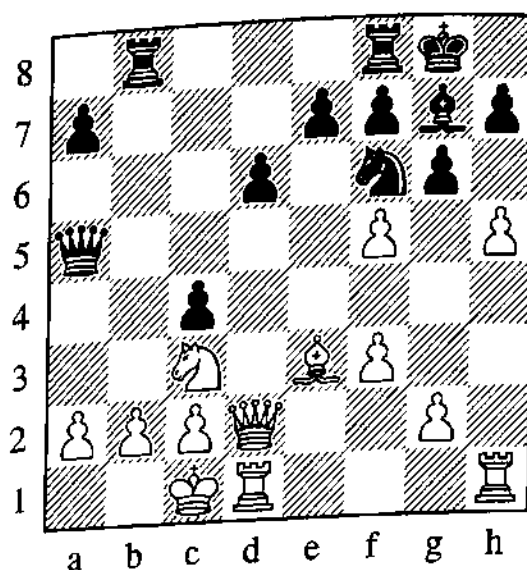
### 15.♖f5!?

It's unusual to be able to play such a move, but here it is connected with some precise ideas. Unfortunately, Black is able to keep his position together with some cleverness of his own:

### 15...♗xf5

15...gxf5 16.h6 is the key idea. 16...♖xe4! (16...♗h8? 17.♗b6+–) 17.fxe4 ♗f6 18.exf5

This position could be checked in more detail, but Black's defences look shaky. 16.exf5 ♗a5! 16...♖xh5 17.♗d4→ looks dangerous.

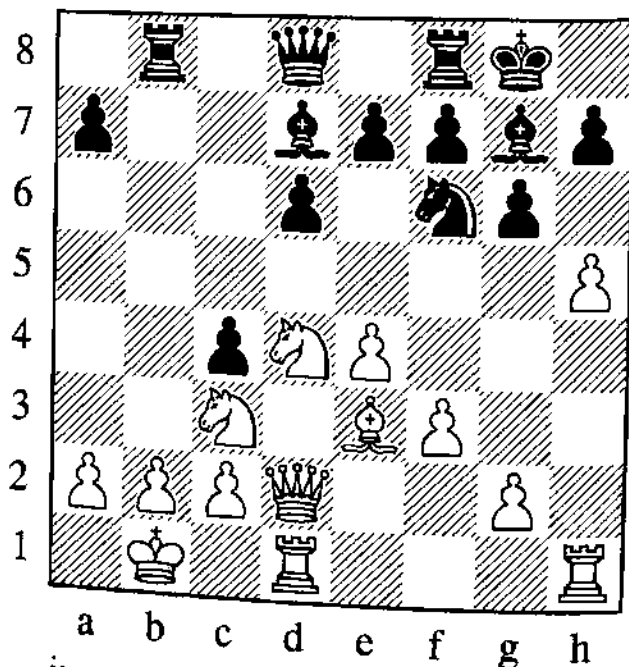


### 17.♗d4!?

17.hxg6 ♖xb2!? 18.gxh7† ♖h8 19.♗de1 ♖fb8 20.♖d1 ♗xf5 21.♗xa7 ♖d5 22.♖xd5 ♖xc2 23.♗xc2 ♗xd5† was agreed drawn due to the perpetual in Catt – Rilberg, email 2009.

### 17...♗xf5 18.hxg6 ♗xg6!

This might be an interesting position to analyse further, but I couldn't see a clear path to an advantage for White. (However, it should be noted that 18...hxg6? is a serious error due to 19.♗h3! followed by ♗dh1 when Black's position is collapsing.)



### 15...♗b6!

Black has to provoke b2-b3, otherwise White gets the best of both worlds, i.e. ♖a1 and h4-h5.

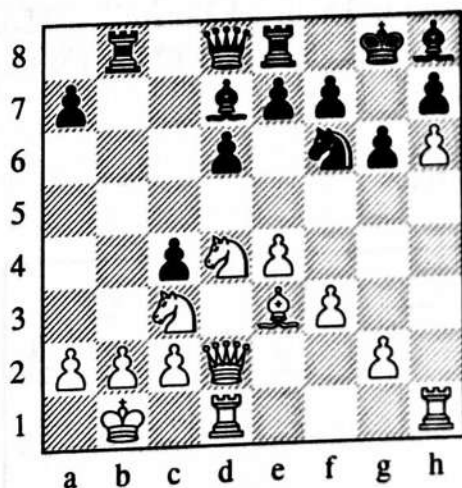
15...♞e8

This is too slow, and allows White to stabilize the position and get a slight edge.

16.h6!?

16.♖a1!? ♖xh5 17.g4 ♖f6 18.♔f5!? (18.♙h6 ♜b6!) deserves attention, but there is no special need for it, so I won't analyse it in depth.

16...♙h8



17.♔de2

White just plays for a positional edge. Unless Black can somehow provoke b2-b3, White should be perfectly safe on the queenside.

17...♖a5 18.♙d4 ♖a3 19.♖c1 ♞b7 20.♖a1 ♖a5 21.♖d2 ♞eb8 22.♞b1 ♞c8 23.g4±

Shankland – Cvitan, Biel 2014.

16.b3

White may as well play this immediately, as after 16.♖c1 ♖a5 17.♖a1 ♞b7 he will find it hard to protect b2.

16...♖b4

16...♖a5? runs into 17.♔d5!, so the text move is the only real way to keep up the queenside pressure.

17.♙g5

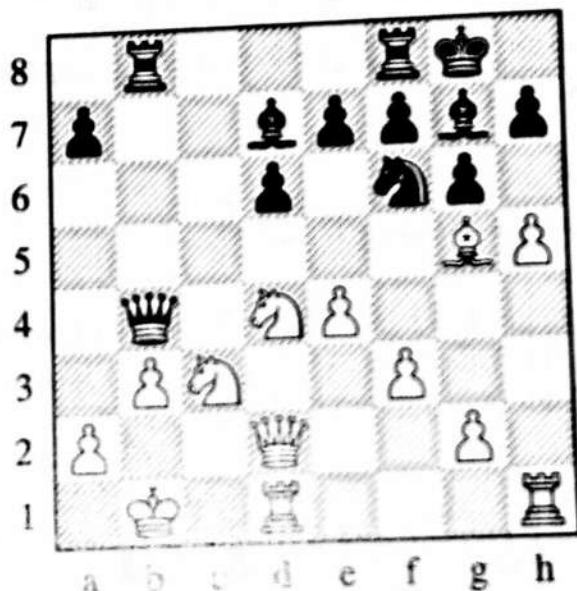
White has to aim for a quick ♔d5, otherwise Black's attack will be too fast.

17...cxb3

Black had better play this immediately, as 17...♞fe8? 18.♙xf6 cxb3 (18...exf6 19.g4±) 19.axb3! ♙xf6 20.♔d5 would lead to a bad endgame for him.

18.cxb3

18.axb3 would be more desirable in the endgame, but it is not the best defensive move. Black has good chances after 18...e6!, avoiding the queen exchange.



18...♞fe8!

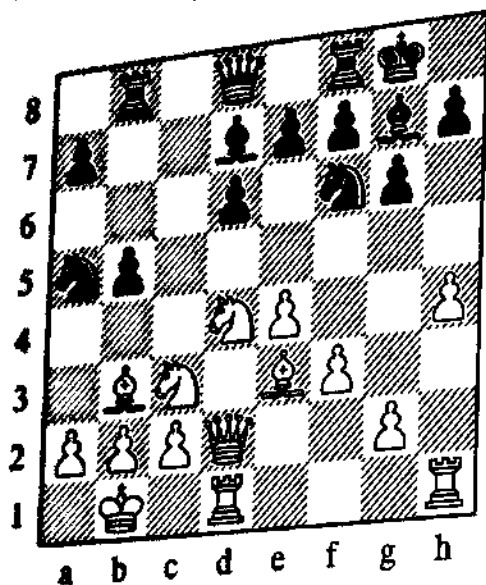
After 18...♞fe8 19.♙xf6 ♙xf6 20.♔d5 ♖xd2 21.♞xd2 the bishop seems stuck on f6 and White has the better chances.

19.♙xf6 ♙xf6 20.♔d5 ♖xd4 21.♖xd4 ♙xd4 22.♞xd4

White intends ♞c1, with ongoing pressure on the queenside.



B2) 13.♔b1

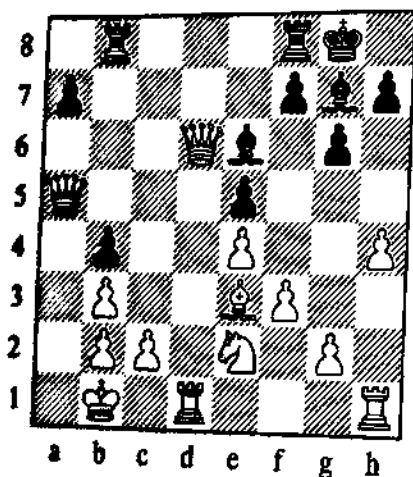


This time we will take a moment to improve the king's position.

13...♖c4

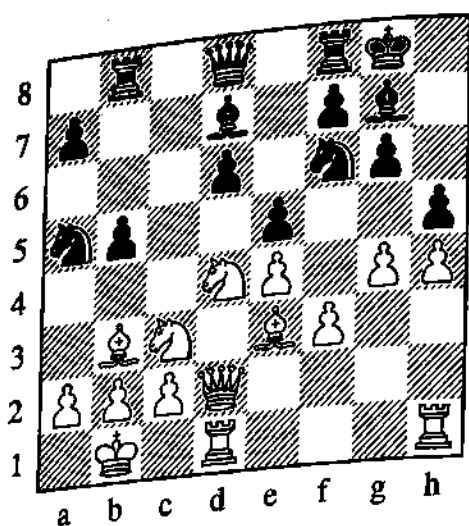
Black has nothing better:

Unlike after 13.g4, 13...e5?! does not work here: 14.♖de2 b4 15.♖d5 ♖xb3 16.axb3 ♖xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗e6 18.♗xd6 ♗a5



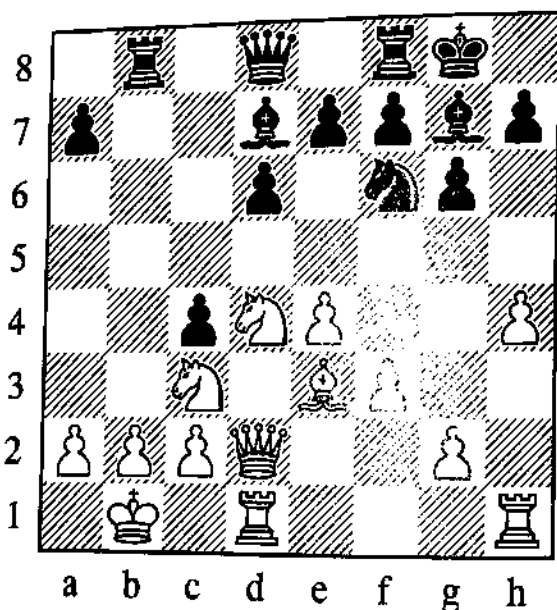
19.h5 ♗fc8 20.hxg6 hxg6 21.♖cl±

13...h5 14.g4 e5 (14...hxg4 runs into the typical response 15.h5! ♖xh5 16.fxg4 ♗xg4 17.♗dg1 with a crushing attack)



15.♖de2 (15.♖f5! is interesting too, but we've no need to involve ourselves in unnecessary complications) 15...hxg4 Borstnik – Haugen, email 2010. 16.♗g5! Nxf3 17.♖g3 White has a dangerous attack.

14.♗xc4 bxc4



15.g4!

I want to play in the style of the recent Shankland – Cvitan game we saw after 13.h5 but, instead of h4-h5, we have played g2-g4. It is more useful in some of the concrete lines after ...♗b6, as we have the additional resource of g4-g5 followed by ♖d5.

White would like to play 15.♔a1 to nullify Black's pressure along the b-file, but the problem is that 15...h5! makes it hard for us to make progress on the kingside. It is not as easy

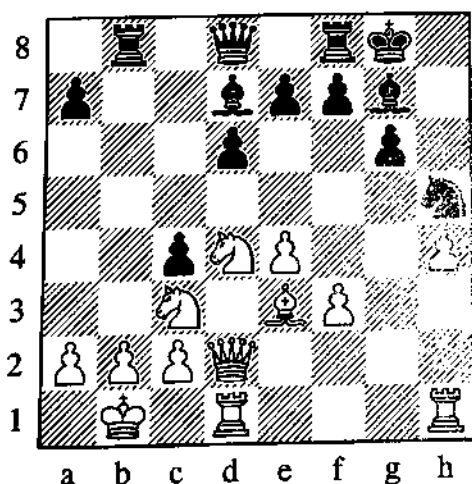
as playing g2-g4 and throwing all the pieces into the attack, as the open b-file will keep at least a few of White's pieces tied up.

### 15...♜b6

Other moves can be met by ♔a1 and ♜b1, shutting down Black's queenside play. Black can no longer defend with ...h5, as White will simply take on h5 and eventually prise open the g-file without having to rush to sacrifice anything.

15...♖a5 threatens ...♜b4 but 16.♔a1 easily defends. 16...♜b7N 17.h5 ♜fb8 18.♜b1± is a perfect illustration of White's strategy: Black has little to do on the queenside, while he can't restrict White's kingside play either.

15...h5N 16.gxh5! (16.♙h6 is a typical idea, but after 16...♙xh6 17.♖xh6 ♜b6 18.b3 ♖a5 Black gets too much counterplay for my liking) 16...♙xh5



17.♔a1!→ White gets ready to defend the b-pawn with ♜b1. It is hard to see how Black can progress his attack, while White has no shortage of ideas: ♙de2, ♜hg1 and ♙d4 are obvious ways to improve his position.

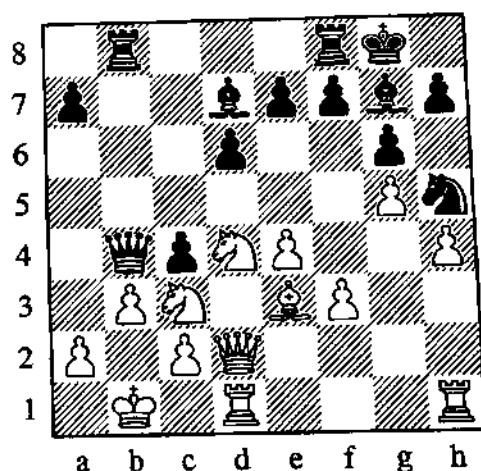
### 16.b3 ♖c7!

Not an obvious move, but it seems to be best. The idea is to put pressure on the c3-knight while taking the sting out of ♙d5 ideas.

16...♖a5? is no good: 17.♙d5! ♖xd2 18.♙xe7† ♔h8 19.♜xd2 ♜be8 20.♙ec6±

16...♖a6?! 17.h5 Black's queen is misplaced – there is no immediate pressure on c3, and in such positions one tempo can make all the difference. 17...♜fc8 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.g5 ♙h5 20.♙d5→

16...♜b4 17.g5! (In the event of 17.h5 ♜fc8 Black's play is faster) 17...♙h5N (17...cxb3?! 18.cxb3 did not help Black at all in Zelesco – Karunanayake, Kuala Lumpur 2011; White's play is the same as in the line below, and the release of the queenside tension only simplifies his task.)



18.♙d5 ♖a3 (18...♖xd2 19.♙xe7†±) 19.♙xe7† ♔h8 20.♖c3 Black is a pawn down and he has no immediate way through on the queenside. It might look as though White's kingside play is completely blocked, but he can consider ♙d5-f6 to open things up again.

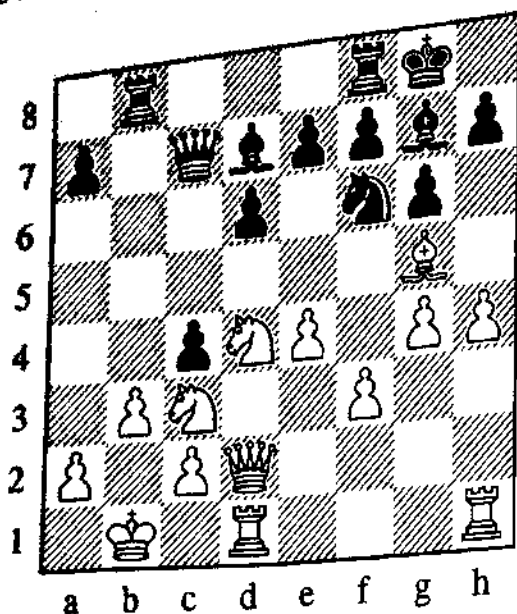
### 17.♙g5!

Obviously we would have preferred to manage without b2-b3, so we need to be precise to justify that. The plan of taking on f6 and playing ♙d5 makes the most sense against the queen on c7.

17.h5 ♜fc8! is unclear.

17.g5 ♙h5 18.♙d5 ♖d8 Since White doesn't win the e7-pawn here, it makes little sense to block the kingside. 19.♙e2 ♙e6 20.♙d4∞





### 17...cxb3

17... $\text{Bfc8}$  18. $\text{Bxf6}$  cxb3 gives White the extra option of 19.axb3!? (19.cxb3 transposes to our main line) and in all the endgames White's structure is much better.

### 18.cxb3

18.axb3  $\text{Bc6}$ ! gives Black attacking chances in the middlegame.

### 18...Bfc8 19.Bxf6 Bxc3

White must decide whether to take on c3 or e7. The two moves might transpose, but they give different extra options to Black.

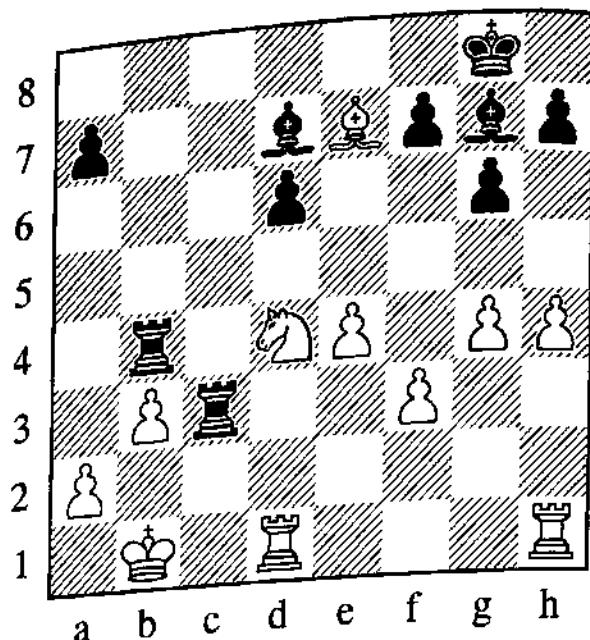
### 20.Bxe7?

20. $\text{Bxc3}$   $\text{Bxc3}$  21. $\text{Bxe7}$   $\text{Bxd4}$  (21... $\text{Bb4}$  is the main line below) 22. $\text{Bxd4}$   $\text{Bxf3}$  reaches an opposite-coloured-bishop endgame which the text move avoids. White stands better without any risk, so you may wish to consider this too.

### 20...Bb4

Black can avoid the endgame with 20... $\text{Bc5}$ , but 21.g5  $\text{Bc5}$  22. $\text{Bf6}$   $\text{Bxf6}$  23.gxf6  $\text{Bxf6}$  24.h5 gives White a pleasant initiative. Without the dark-squared bishops, Black's attacking possibilities are limited.

### 21.Bxc3 Bxc3



22. $\text{Bxe2}$   $\text{Bxf3}$  23. $\text{Bxd6}$   $\text{Bb7}$  24. $\text{Bhd1}$   $\text{Be8}$  25. $\text{Bg5}+$

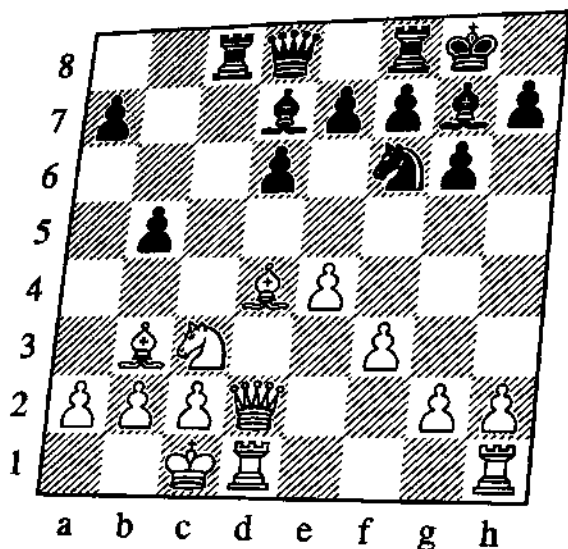
Black has some drawing chances, but White is a pawn up and clearly pressing.

## Conclusion

10... $\text{Ba5}$  presents an interesting challenge: on the one hand it is hardly ever used by top players these days but, historically speaking, it has been played in a huge number of games and cannot just be swept under a rug. My recommendation of 13. $\text{Bg5}$ ! is a good solution, as it poses serious problems without requiring an excessive amount of preparation from White – although it is worth remembering certain details, such as 18.a4! in the main line.

The Chinese Dragon presents a unique set of challenges, as White needs to weigh up his attacking and defensive priorities in a way that rarely occurs in other Dragon lines. The availability of the ...e5 resource is also uncharacteristic of the Dragon in general. Nevertheless, I found that both 13.h5 and 13. $\text{Bb1}$  offer White good chances. The latter is my main recommendation, but you may choose whichever option you like the most.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6  
5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.♙f3 0-0 8.♙d2 ♘c6  
9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0 ♙c8 11.♙b3 ♘xd4  
12.♙xd4 b5

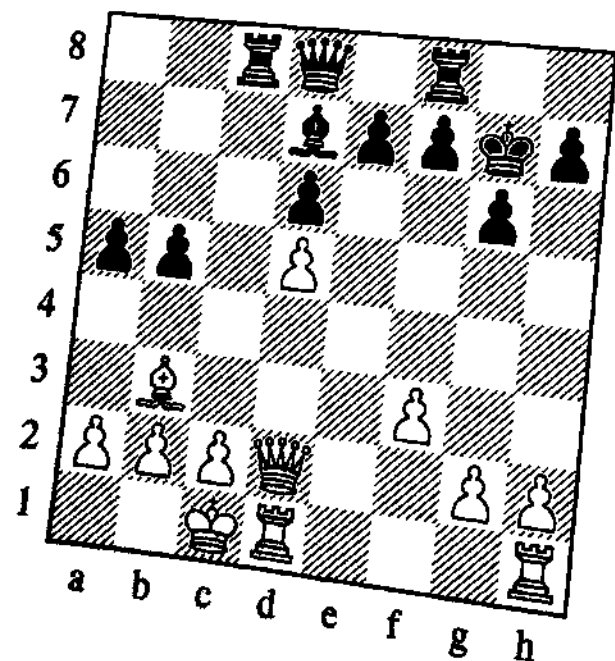


This plan was unheard of until 1996, but it has since become one of the most popular and fashionable variations of the Dragon.

### 13.♘d5

The blunt 13.h4 is tempting, but 13...a5 14.h5 a4 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6! 16.hxg6 e6! is a brilliant idea which completely defuses White's attack; see for instance J. Polgar – Jones, London (rapid) 2013.

13...♘xd5 14.♙xg7 ♘xg7 15.exd5 a5



### 16.a3

White has some positional trumps, with an open e-file and attacking chances on the kingside. Black of course has some counter-chances on the other wing, and will often sacrifice a pawn there. We will consider A) 16...♙b6 and B) 16...b4 followed by the more subtle C) 16...♙g8!

#### A) 16...♙b6

This used to be considered too slow, but some correspondence players have tried to revive it based on some concrete ideas. White must tread surprisingly carefully in the next few moves, but once he sidesteps a couple of small tactical tricks, Black's play becomes increasingly artificial.

The first point to mention is that Black's ...b4 advance will usually be met by the blocking a3-a4, since Black's queen no longer has access to the e8-square. To get around this difficulty, Black often tries to arrange a queenside breakthrough with ...♙b8, ...a4 and ...b4, which will force a queen exchange while avoiding any problem with his queenside structure in the endgame. As long as we can successfully deal with this idea, we should be able to count on a good position.

### 17.♙h1

Clearly the best continuation, threatening the e-pawn while preventing the tactic mentioned in the note below.

17.h4? a4 18.♙a2 ♙xc2†! 19.♙xc2 (19.♙xc2? ♙f5†→) 19...♙c8 is a trap we must watch out for. The position with two rooks against the queen is unpleasant for White due to his open king and weak pawns.

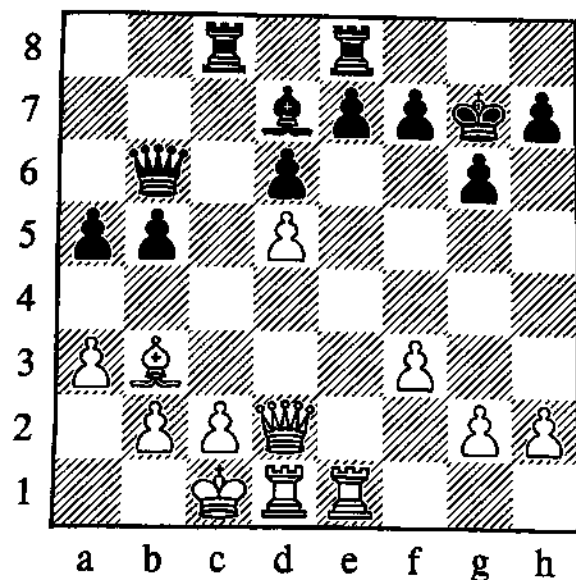
17.♙d1 might appear tempting, but 17...♙f5! 18.g4 a4 19.♙xa4 bxa4 20.gxf5 ♙c7 gives Black excellent compensation because White is unable to trade queens with ♙d4†.

17.g4 ♖c7! is a bit more complicated, but I will not take up any more space discussing it; suffice to say Black has plenty of counterplay.

### 17...♖fe8

17...a4 18.♗a2 ♖xc2?? does not work here in view of 19.♕xc2 ♗f5† 20.♖e4.

I also made sure to check 17...♖c7? 18.♖xe7 ♖fc8 19.♖f4 ♗f5 20.♖xc7 ♖xc7 21.c3± when Black has no real compensation for the pawn.



### 18.g4

We should prevent the ...♗f5 option as soon as possible. Moreover, we are now ready to meet the ...♖b8 plan with ♖e4.

18.♖d4† ♖xd4 19.♖xd4 would be a pleasant endgame if we had already exchanged pawns on b4. However, since Black has not yet weakened his queenside, his position remains quite solid.

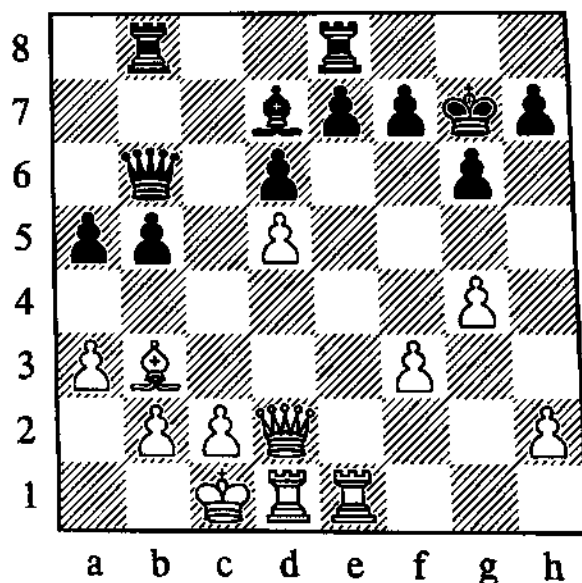
18.♖e2!? would have been an ideal move, but Black gets a lot of counterplay after: 18...h5! (18...♖b8? 19.♖de1!±) 19.h3!?N (After 19.♖de1N ♗f5 it is hard to keep c2 protected.) 19...h4! The position remains double-edged as Black's bishop can still go to f5.

### 18...♖b8

The only way to get counterplay. Unless Black can execute the plan of ...a4 and ...b4, his position seems devoid of active prospects.

18...b4 19.a4 ♖c5 20.♕b1 e5 21.dxe6 ♗xe6 22.h4 ♗xb3 23.cxb3 was the well-known game Anand – Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2001. Black had a tough position with loose pawns and the more exposed king, and he subsequently went down.

18...f5 19.h3 doesn't seem to help Black at all. Since ...b4 can always be met by a3-a4, I don't see much that he can do.



### 19.♖e4!

Preventing the plan of ...a4 and ...b4.

### 19...f5

This is the only way to justify the decision to put the rook on b8. At the same time, it seems artificial for Black to weaken his kingside like this.

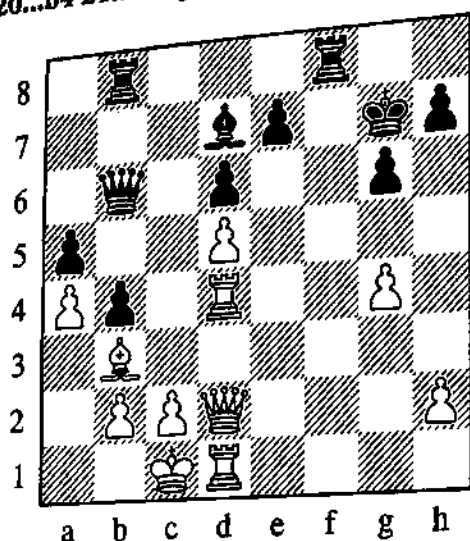
### 20.♖d4

I briefly considered 20.gxf5N ♗xf5 21.♖h4, but the machine points out that Black is fine after 21...♖bc8!.

20.♖f4N fxg4 21.♖e1!? is interesting to analyse but Black seems to be okay; in any case,

I am happy with White's position in the main line so there is no great need to look for an improvement.

20...b4 21.a4 fxe4 22.fxe4 ♖f8



23.♞e4

23.♞e1! ♞f7 24.♞b1 is an interesting way to prevent Black's queen from getting to f2, but this isn't something that bothers me a great deal.

23...♞f7 24.♞de1 ♞bf8 25.h3!?

Not the only move, but it seems to me that Black will struggle to create any play if we just consolidate everything.

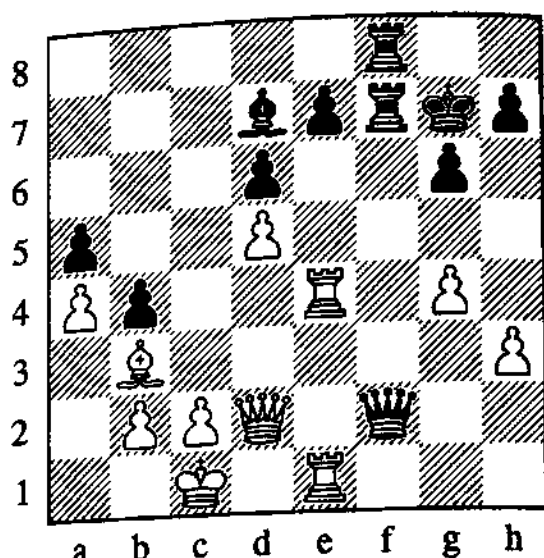
25...♞f2

25...♞d8 26.♞e3 steadily increases the pressure.

25...♞g8 26.♞e2! prevents the rook from going to f1, and 26...♞f2 (26...♞f2? is met by 27.♞d1± and the e7-pawn falls) 27.♞a6! is similar to the main line below.

We have been following the correspondence game Winkler – Olsen, email 2007, in which Black somehow managed to hold a draw in the pawn-down endgame after 26.♞xe7. This doesn't seem like a great scenario for Black to

aim for out of the opening, but in any case we can maintain the pressure if we simply avoid the queen exchange.



26.♞d3! ♞N

Black will soon run out of useful moves, while White can continue to improve. For one thing he can bring the king to safety on a2. Then he can either advance on the kingside or pile up along the e-file. The only vaguely threatening idea for Black could be to manoeuvre his queen to e2 to hit the a4-pawn, but this would be an admission that ...♞f2 was a waste of time.

26...♞g8

26...♞c8 27.♞b1±

27.♞b1

27.♞a6!? ♞c5 28.♞b1 is similar.

27...♞b6

27...♞f3? just weakens Black's defences; 28.♞a6 is close to winning for White.

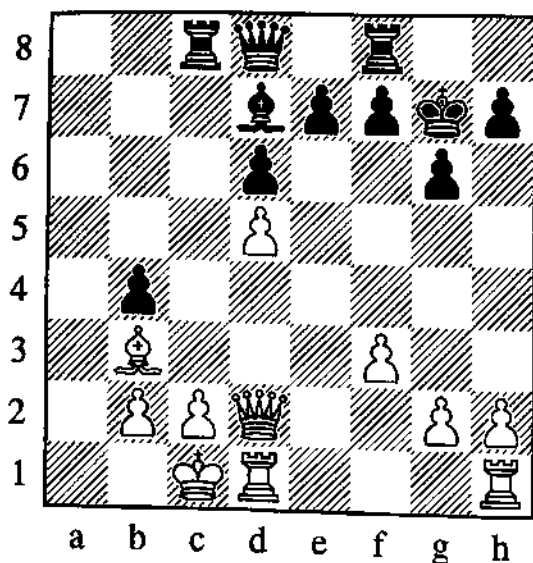
28.♞a2 ♞d8 29.h4!?

This direct plan seems promising, although White could also maintain the squeeze with a move like 29.♞a6.

29...♞e8 30.h5 ♞xa4 31.♞xa4 ♞xa4†

**32.♟b1↑**

Intending ♖e6 with strong pressure.

**B) 16...b4 17.axb4 axb4**

This thematic pawn sacrifice is at the heart of Black's set-up. His idea in this line largely revolves around giving away the pawn and manoeuvring with the major pieces to slowly generate pressure on the queenside. Black may not have any immediate threats, but it's not so easy for White to develop a quick attack either, and after moves like ...♖c5, ...♗c7/...♗a8 and ...♖b8 Black's threats will become apparent.

**18.h4!?**

18.♗xb4 may also lead to a theoretical plus, but I prefer to continue fighting for the initiative.

The text move is considerably less popular than capturing the pawn, but I think it has been underrated. The concept of declining such a pawn sacrifice is easy to grasp; the only reason why it took a long time before people started doing it here is that Black's threats with ...♗a5 and ...♟f5xc2 look dangerous. However, White has the nice idea of running away with the king with ♗d4(†) followed by ♟d2, while the quick h4-h5 makes certain that White is

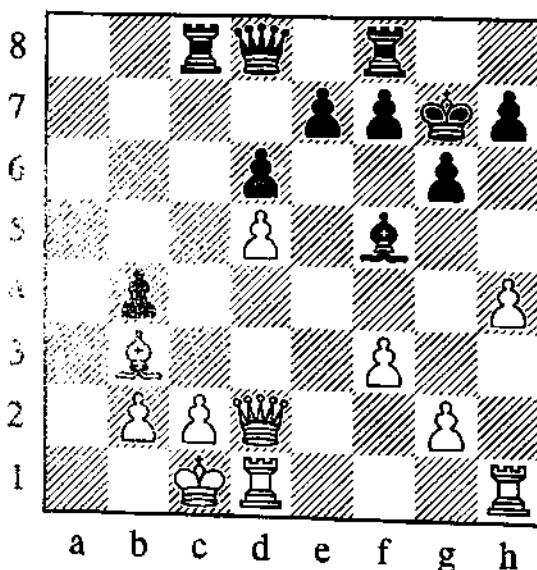
doing what he really wants in the Dragon: attacking!

We will analyse two main options: B1) 18...♟f5 and B2) 18...♗a5.

18...♟g8 transposes to variation C and is probably Black's best.

18...♗b6N 19.♗d4† ♗xd4 20.♖xd4 ♖b8 21.♖e1 ♖fe8 22.♟d2± gives White a pleasant endgame.

18...♖a8 commits the rook prematurely and after 19.♗xb4!N ♗c7 20.h5 g5 21.♖he1↑ White is clearly on top.

**B1) 18...♟f5**

The idea to provoke ♗xb4 makes some sense, but more so after he has already played ...♟g8.

**19.♗xb4!N**

This is more logical than 19.♗d4†, as played in Babrauskas – Setkauskas, Lithuania 2010. True, 19...♟g8 transposes to a position from which White has scored heavily, but Black's subsequent play can be improved.

Generally when White captures the b-pawn Black will target the white queen and chase it

around, so leaving the king on g7 gives White the useful option of gaining time with a check on d4. The bishop is also unstable on f5; once White has dealt with the obvious threat of ... $\text{Qxc2}$ , he may be able to kick the bishop away with g2-g4.

19... $\text{Qc7}$

19... $\text{Qc5}$  20.g4±

20.c4!

Admittedly this is not the most difficult move, but advancing the pawn in front of the king is a bold choice which makes a nice impression. The c4-pawn is not so easy to attack, and it provides plenty of room for White to regroup and start playing on the kingside.

20. $\text{Qd2}$  resembles variation C221 but there is an important difference: 20... $\text{Qg8}$  (20... $\text{Qa7}$  is met by 21. $\text{Qhe1}$  intending g2-g4) 21.h5 The position is almost the same as on page 47, but here White hasn't had time to play hxg6. As a result, the tactical possibilities against the open black king are missing, so Black can just play 21... $\text{Qxc2}$ !

20. $\text{Qd4}$  is a typical idea but here Black can continue improving his position with 20... $\text{Qa7}$ . I am not sure how White can coordinate his pieces without allowing counterplay or a repetition.

20. $\text{Qa4}$ ! is an interesting way of guarding c2 while preparing g2-g4. The position after 20... $\text{Qg8}$  21.g4  $\text{Qd7}$  22. $\text{Qd4}$   $\text{Qb8}$  23. $\text{Qc4}$   $\text{Qb5}$  could certainly be explored in more detail, but I don't see the need for this as the main line is promising enough.

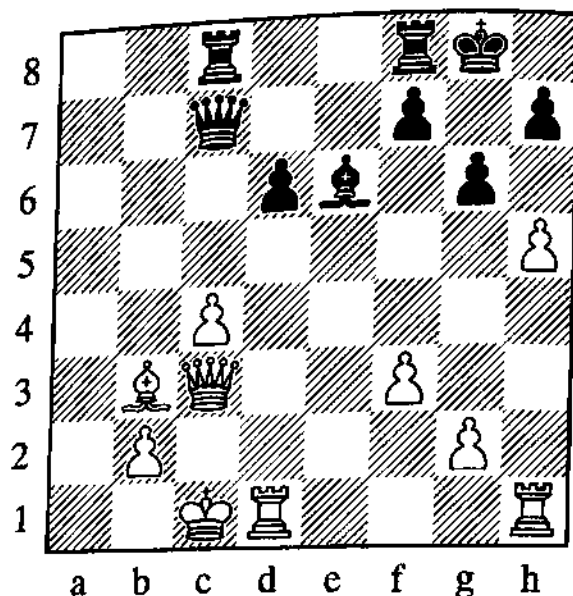
20...e5

This is Black's only real way to generate counterplay.

20...e6? 21.g4 traps the bishop.

20... $\text{Qb8}$  and 20... $\text{Qa8}$  can both be met by 21. $\text{Qc3}$ †  $\text{Qg8}$  22.g4  $\text{Qd7}$  23.h5 with a big advantage for White.

21.dxe6  $\text{Qxe6}$  22. $\text{Qc3}$ †  $\text{Qg8}$  23.h5



23...d5

23... $\text{Qxc4}$ ? is refuted by 24.hxg6 fxg6 25. $\text{Qxh7}$ !  $\text{Qxh7}$  26. $\text{Qxc4}$ † and Black collapses.

The text move is better, but White can simply allow ... $\text{dxc4}$  and block the c-file.

24.g4 dxc4 25. $\text{Qc2}$ †

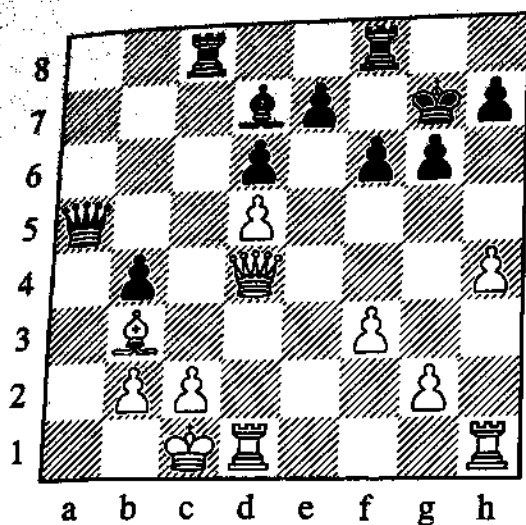
White keeps some pressure on the kingside.

B2) 18... $\text{Qa5}$  19. $\text{Qd4}$ †

Now 19... $\text{Qg8}$  20.h5 transposes to variation C1, and the only independent possibility looks odd:

19...f6

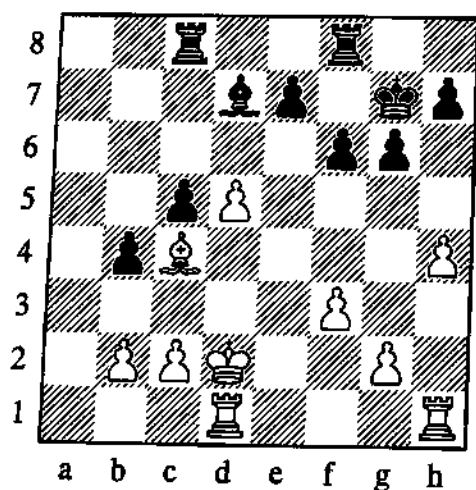
This does not seem too worrying for us. Black's pawn weaknesses will cause him problems, even if he exchanges queens.



20. Bhe1

20. h5 Bf5! 21. hxc6 Bxc2! 22. Bxh7+ Kg8 is a mess, which the machine evaluates as equal.

20. Qd2 is slightly less accurate than the text move, but it leads to an edge for White and was my choice when I encountered this position. The game continued: 20... Bc5 21. Bxc5 dxc5 (21... Bxc5 can be met by 22. Bde1± intending Bc4, although White could also bring the h1-rook to the e-file and keep the other rook to play on the a-file.) 22. Qc4

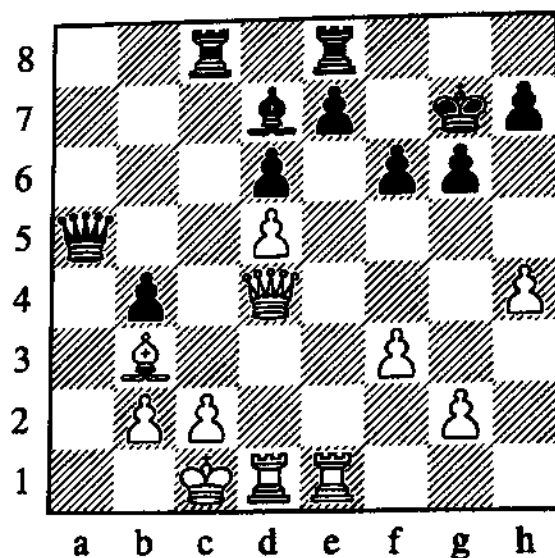


White has a slightly more pleasant endgame, and I was able to increase my advantage: 22... Bfd8 23. Qe3 Qe8 24. Ba1 Bc7 25. Ba5 Qf7 26. Bd1 Bd6 27. Bd3 g5 28. g3 h6 29. f4 Qg6 30. Bd2 Qf7 31. f5 Qh5 32. Qe4 Qg4 33. Bf2± These moves show how hard it is for Black to get counterplay or even a clear plan

in such endgames. I went on to win in Negi – Berndt, Germany 2008.

20... Bfe8

In Kobese – Cawdery, Johannesburg 2007, White should have continued:



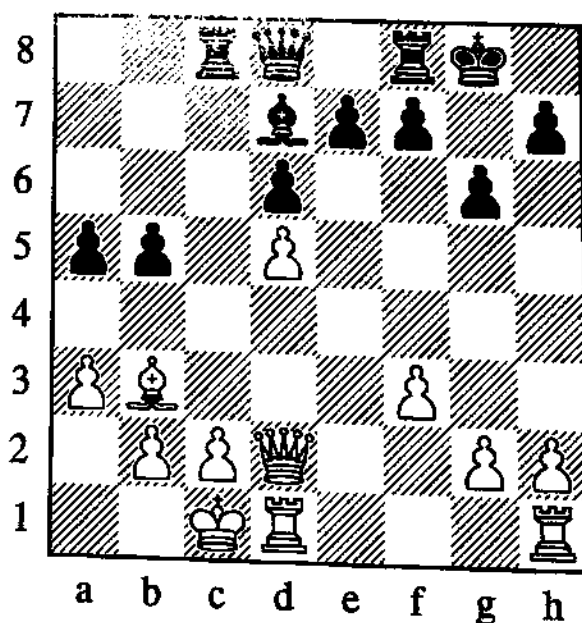
21. Qd2! N Bc5 22. Bxc5 dxc5

22... Bxc5 23. Bc4±

23. Qc4

White has a marginally improved version of the ending I obtained against Berndt, and can increase the pressure in the same manner.

23... Kg8!





This is the most precise move order, which I have used myself with Black. The idea is to get the best possible version of the pawn sacrifice by playing a useful move which is almost always required at some point. If you compare it with the 16...b4 line, you will realize that after 17.axb4 axb4 18.♖xb4 Black almost always plays 18...♗g8 anyway. The text move delays ...b4 for the moment, thus giving White fewer chances to regroup successfully, while leaving the ...b4 idea hanging over his head.

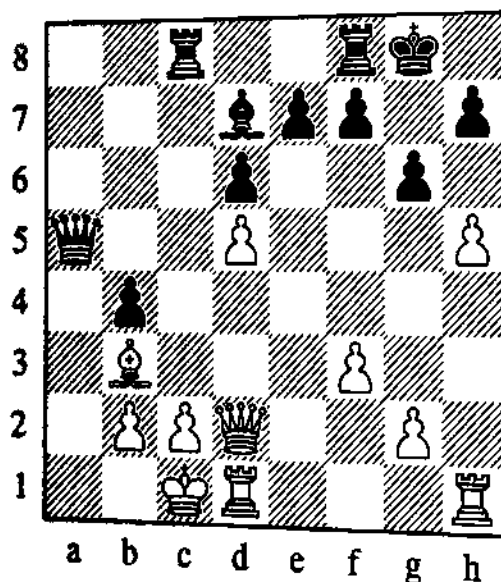
#### 17.h4

17.♖h1 ♖c5! is the key idea, whereby Black continues to improve his position before playing ...b4. Quite a few high-level (including correspondence) games have been played here, and it seems that Black is doing fine.

#### 17...b4 18.axb4 axb4 19.h5

We will analyse C1) 19...♖a5 and C2) 19...♗f5!.

#### C1) 19...♖a5

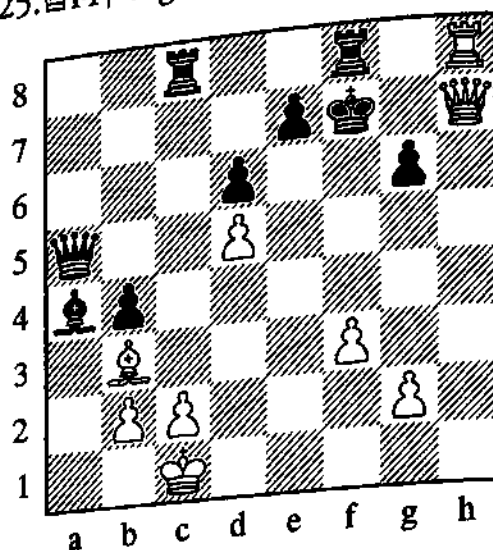


This is the most natural and forcing continuation.

#### 20.♖d4 ♗f5

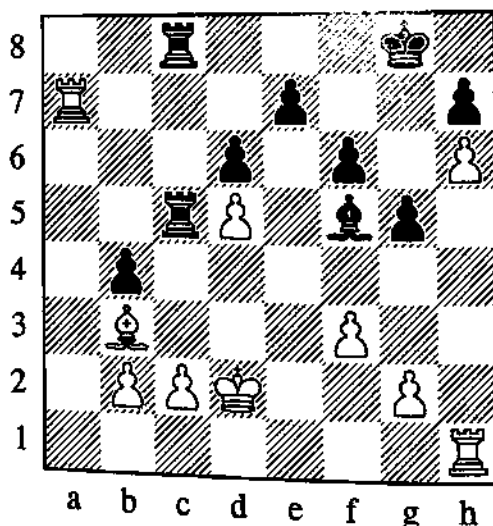
20...♗a4? is the wrong way to go after the c2-pawn, because Black needs to keep an eye on

h7 as well. We still require some really cool and precise moves to dismantle the defence: 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♖xh7! ♗xh7 23.♖h1† ♗g8 24.♖h8† ♗f7 25.♖f4† ♗g7 26.♖h6† ♗f7 27.♖h7†



27...♗e8 (27...♗f6 28.♖h4† ♗f7 29.♖h7† ♗g8 30.♖h6+—) A few games have reached this position; the easiest win is 28.♗xa4† ♖xa4 29.♖xg6† intending 29...♗d7 30.♖e6† ♗c7 31.♖xf8 ♖xf8 32.♖xe7† and Black can resign.

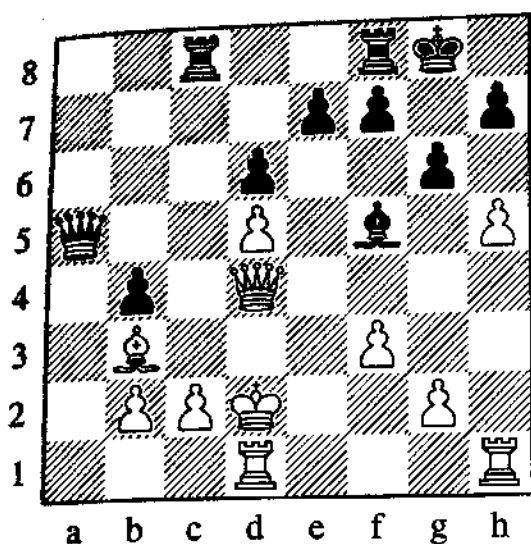
20...g5?! is too weakening. 21.h6 (21.♗d2!?) 21...f6 22.♗d2 ♗f5 (22...♖c5 23.♖xc5 dxc5 24.♗c4± is similar to what we saw in my game against Berndt in variation B.2) 23.♖a1 ♖c5 24.♖xc5 ♖xc5 25.♖a7 ♖fc8



26.♖e1! White can play directly for mate. (Even if this possibility did not exist, the quiet 26.♖c1 would give White a promising endgame) 26...♗xc2 27.♖exe7 White is winning, as 27...♗xb3 28.♖xh7 ♖xd5† 29.♗e3 ♖e8† 30.♗f2 soon leads to mate.



21.♔d2



21...♖c5

Black has a huge choice of options, although the text move – which threatens ...♙xc2 – is the only one to have been seriously tested.

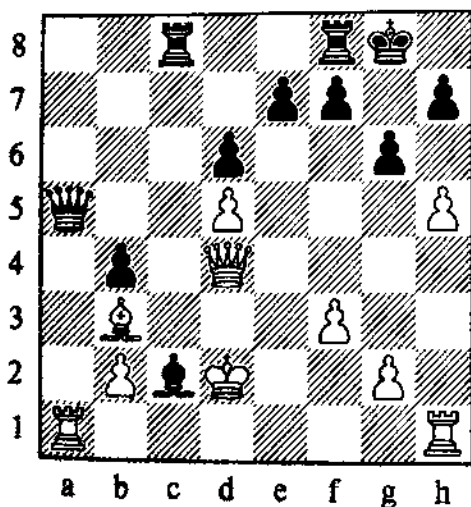
21...♖c7? is too slow. 22.g4±

21...g5? 22.g4 ♔d7 23.♖he1 is also poor for Black.

21...♙c5N is not so bad, but the structure after 22.♙xc5 dxc5 23.♙c4± favours White, as usual.

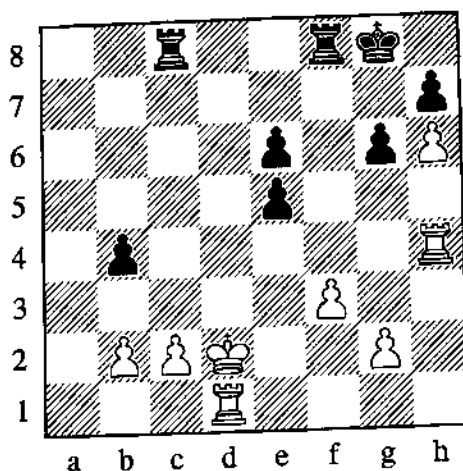
21...♖xc2+?! should be considered, but 22.♙xc2 b3+ 23.♙c3! ♙xc3+ 24.bxc3 ♙xc2 25.♖de1 gives White good winning chances.

21...♙xc2?! 22.♖a1! is an important point:



22...♙b5 (22...♙c7 23.♖hc1±) 23.♙xc2 ♖c4 24.♙e3 ♙xd5+ 25.♙d3 ♖d4 26.♙e2±

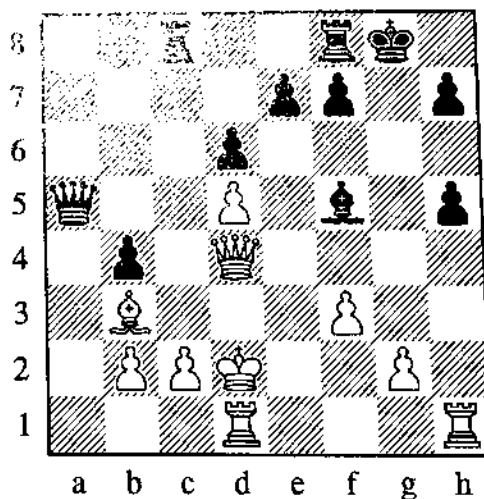
21...e5 Black isn't quite ready for this. 22.dxe6 ♙xe6 23.h6! ♙e5 24.♙xe5 dxe5 25.♙xe6 fxe6 26.♖h4



Black faced a difficult endgame in Firat – Vakhidov, Kemer 2009. It is worth noting that 26...♖f4 does not solve his problems after 27.♖xf4 exf4 28.♖a1±.

Finally, Black can create a retreat square on g6 for his bishop with:

21...gxh5



22.♖xh5

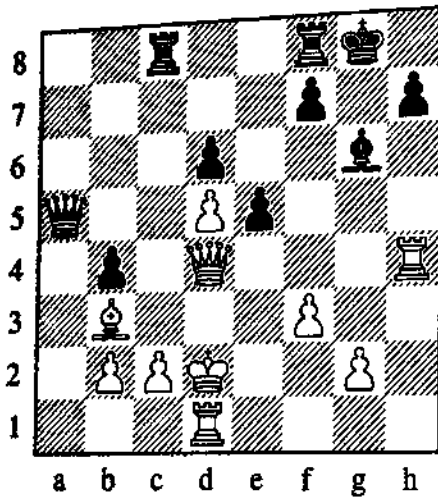
22.♖a1!N is a more positional approach. 22...♙c5 23.♙xc5 dxc5 24.♖xh5 ♙g6 25.♖h4 ♖fd8 26.♙e3 The endgame is pleasant for White.

22...♙g6 23.♖h4 e5!N

An interesting tactical idea, but White remains on top.

23...Bc5 24.Qe3 favoured White in Georgiadis - Harutyunian, Porto Carras 2010, and 24.Qxb4!N could also have been considered.

23...Bb8N 24.Qe1 Bfc8 25.Qf1 Qc5 26.Qd2±



24.dxc6

24.Qxb4 Qa7! 25.Qe2 Qxc2 is at least equal for Black.

24...Qxc2† 25.Qxc2

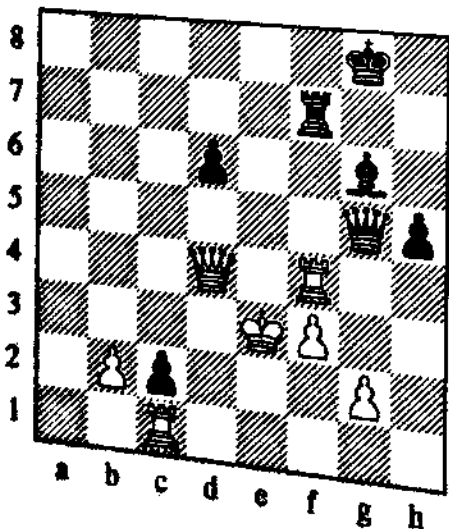
25.Qe1 Qxg2∞

25...b3† 26.Qe3!

26.Qc3 Qg5††

26...bxc2 27.exf7† Qxf7 28.Qc1 Qg5† 29.Qf4 h5

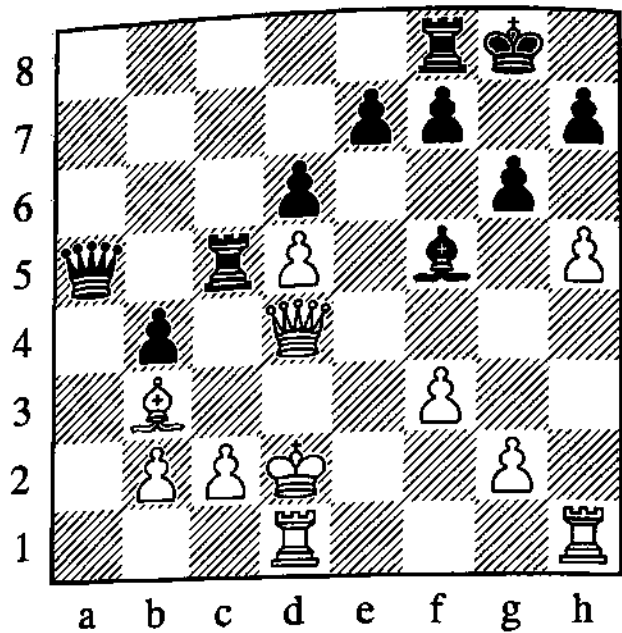
29...d5 30.g3 sees White consolidate, as 30...Qe4 can be met by the cool 31.Qa1! with a winning position.



30.Qxd6 h4

30...Qh7 31.g3±

31.Qxg6† Qxg6 32.Qg4±



22.hxg6 Qxg6

22...fxg6?!

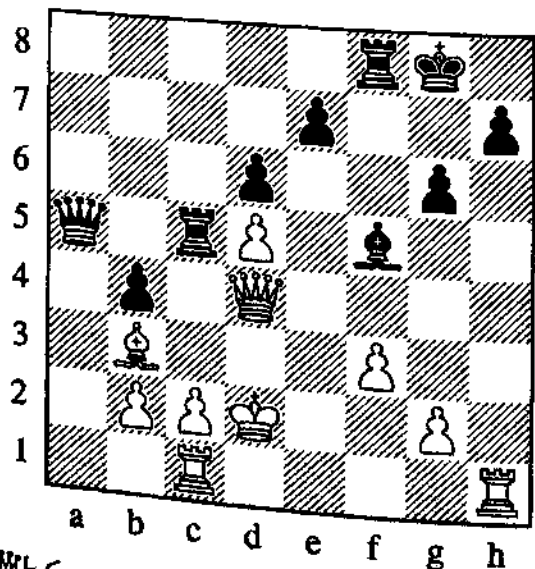
This leaves the h7-pawn in danger, while the bishop is unstable on f5. We just need to keep the tactical options on c2 under control, before arranging g2-g4 with a strong attack.

23.Qc1!

Simply overprotecting c2 in order to play g2-g4 next.

23.g4? Qxc2! 24.Qa1 Qb6 25.Qxh7 Qxh7 26.Qh1† Qg8 27.Qh8† Qf7 28.Qf4† Qf5! leaves White struggling for a draw.

23.Qa1!? Qc7 24.Qac1 is similar to the main line.



23...Qb6

23...g5 24.♖h5! ♔g6 25.♗xg5 e5 26.♞g4 ♞a7 (26...♗f6 27.♕e2±) 27.♕e2 ♗f6 28.♞h4±  
 23...♞b5 24.g4 ♔d7 allows White to do whatever he wants. 25.♗ce1 ♗f7 26.♗e4± is one good option.

24.♞e3±

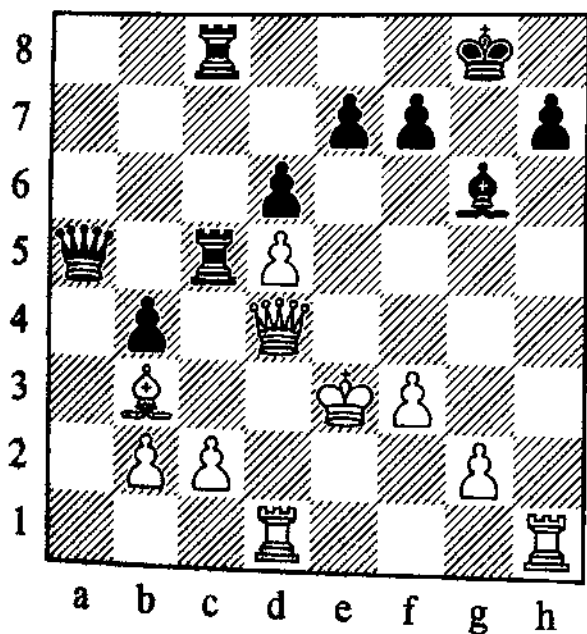
White is ready for g2-g4, and I don't see any counterplay for Black. (24.♔c4!± followed by b2-b3 is another good option.)

We have reached a critical position. Black's strong bishop on g6 is a mixed blessing: although it stands on an excellent outpost where it combines attack and defence, Black also suffers from a serious drawback as he will hardly ever be able to take on c2, as it would leave his king severely exposed. White may walk his king to the kingside, but he can also leave it in the centre after his next move. Other possible plans include shifting his major pieces to the kingside or advancing the g- and f-pawns.

23.♕e3! ♗fc8

23...♞b6 24.♗d2 ♗b8 25.♗h4 ♞a7 26.♕f2± sees White stabilize his position while Black remains passive.

23...♞c7 24.♗h4± does not change much.



24.g4!N

This important novelty forces Black to confront the imminent possibility of f4-f5. Of course the king on e3 isn't ideally placed, but there is no concrete way for Black to target it. In order to understand the significance of this improvement, you should first see what may happen after other moves.

After 24.♗h4 ♞a7 25.♗d2 ♗8c7 26.♗g4 f6 Black was okay and I drew without much difficulty in K. Szabo – Negi, Andorra 2012.

When I had this position with White a few years earlier, I had gone for the usual:

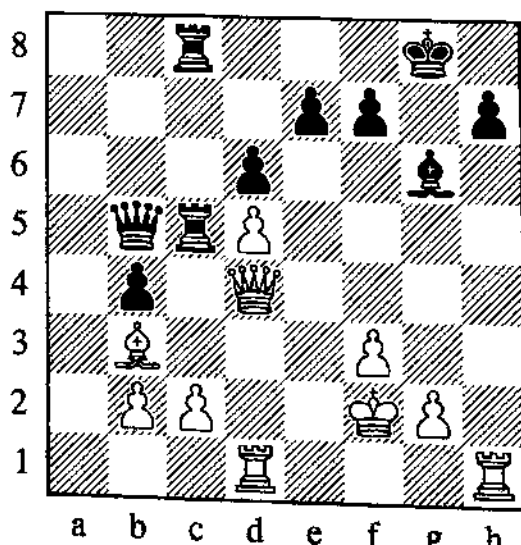
24.♕f2

This is entirely sensible, and it is worth playing through the following lines to get a sense of this position. In the game Black's position disintegrated surprisingly quickly.

24...♞b5

24...♔xc2 25.♔xc2 ♗xc2† 26.♕g3! ♗8c4 27.♞d3+-

24...♞d3!N is the improvement I had in mind when I played the Black side of this line against Szabo – before I realized the power of White's improvement given in the main line. Black brings the queen to g7 and prays that White will not be able to breach the defences. Somehow it seems that Black is indeed okay, as the queen on g7 also opens up the possibility of taking the c2-pawn, which will take some of White's attention away from the kingside.

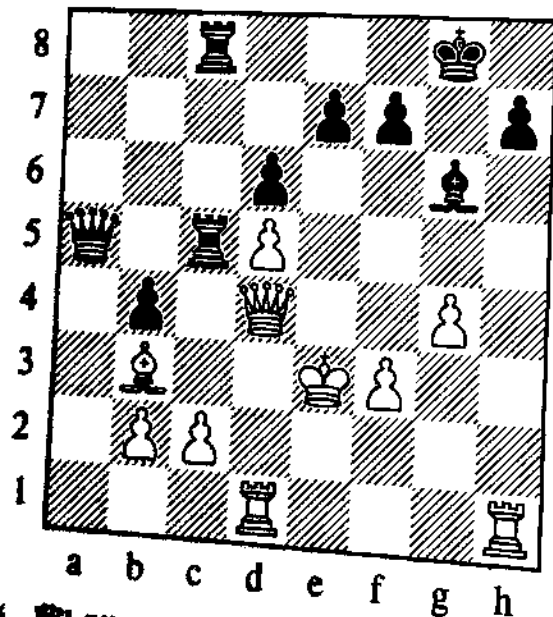


25.♖g3 ♖d7 26.♗e3

Regrouping before the decisive assault.  
26...♞f5 27.♞d4! ♞b5 28.♞g4 ♞f8 29.♞h6  
Black resigned in Negi – Konguvel,  
Mangalore 2008.

The key to the text move is to appreciate that the king is perfectly safe on e3, so we don't need to rush to bring it to the kingside. Once you realize this, the next natural question is how we should improve our position. Considering the usefulness of the ...♞d8-f8-g7 manoeuvre as noted above, the plan of advancing the g- and f-pawns screams out.

My advice to practical players would be not to bother trying to memorize the lines that follow. If you encounter this position over the board, you should have excellent chances as long as you keep an eye on Black's possible tactical resources and choose a suitable moment to advance with f3-f4. The following lines are mainly intended for illustrative purposes, as well as 'proof' against the computer's ingenious defensive tries.



24...♞b5!?

Black prevents f3-f4 by creating a counter-threat of ...♞c4. But White is in no hurry – he can continue to strengthen his position for as long as it takes. The ♖f2-g3 manoeuvre is not

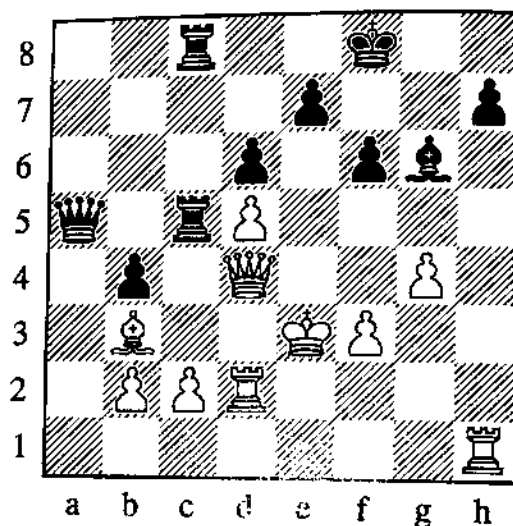
yet possible due to ...♞xc2, so we will start by defending the c-pawn.

24...♞d8? is no good here as 25.f4 leaves Black without a good defence.

24...♞xc2?! 25.♞xc2 ♞xc2 26.♞e4± is also poor for Black.

24...f6 25.♞d2!

25.f4? ♞xc2! 26.♞xc2 ♞xc2 27.♞e4 ♞a7! wins for Black, so White guards the c-pawn.  
25...♖f8



26.♞c1!

26.f4 is premature due to 26...♞xc2! when Black's counterplay is sufficient.

26.♞hh2 runs into 26...♞a6! when ...♞f1 could be troublesome. White has to watch out for these small annoying jumps – but once they are all under control, Black will be in trouble.

I like the text move, and especially the idea that it shows: White can take as much time as he wants to improve his position, as Black's counterplay is dead.

26...♞a7

Other moves can be met in the same way.

27.♖f2

White can play 27.f4!? immediately, but I would be inclined to bring the king to safety before taking action on the kingside. Black has nothing to do, and must remain in a defensive shell.

**25.♞d2!**

Again, we need to prepare for f4-f5 by killing Black's counterplay first. White's plan involves ♞c1 and ♔f2-g3, after which he can start thinking about f3-f4 – although he might even bring the rook back to h1 first!

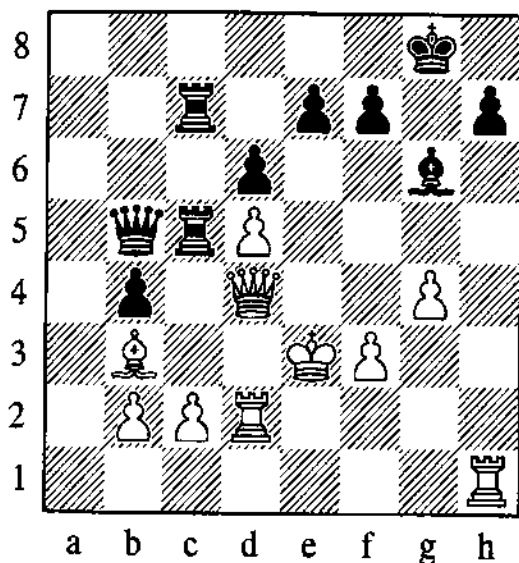
**25...♞8c7**

25...♙xc2? is refuted by 26.♙xc2 ♞xc2 27.♞c4!.

25...e5? doesn't work: 26.dxe6 ♞e5† 27.♔f2 fxe6 28.♞xd6+–

25...♞5c7 26.♞c1 (26.f4? allows 26...♞c4!) 26...f5 (26...f6 27.♔f2 ♙f7 28.f4±) 27.gxf5 ♙xf5 28.♞g1† ♙g6 29.f4±

25...f6 26.♞c1!? is the same plan again. Not much has changed, and Black will continue to suffer.

**26.♞c1**

Just as in the lines above, we will shut down Black's counterplay before doing anything active. White could also try poking around with 26.♞a1, but I will stick to the main plan.

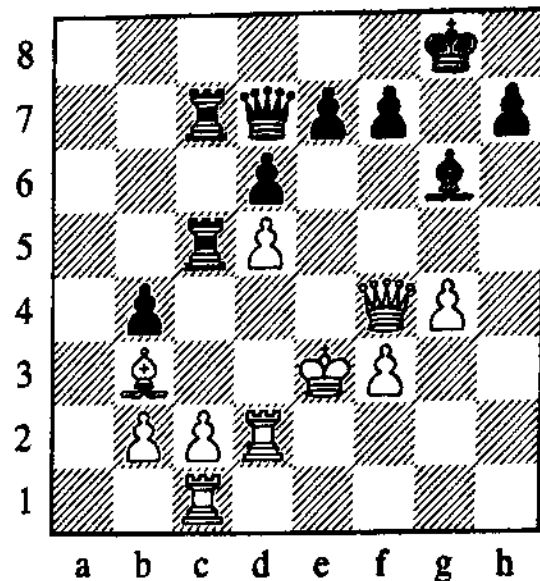
**26...♞d7**

Preventing f3-f4 and planning ...♞c8.

26...♞b7?! allows the unpleasant 27.f4!±.

**27.♞f4!**

27.♔f2 ♞c8! 28.♔g3 ♙xc2 29.♞dxc2 ♞xc2 30.♞h1!? and it's a mess.

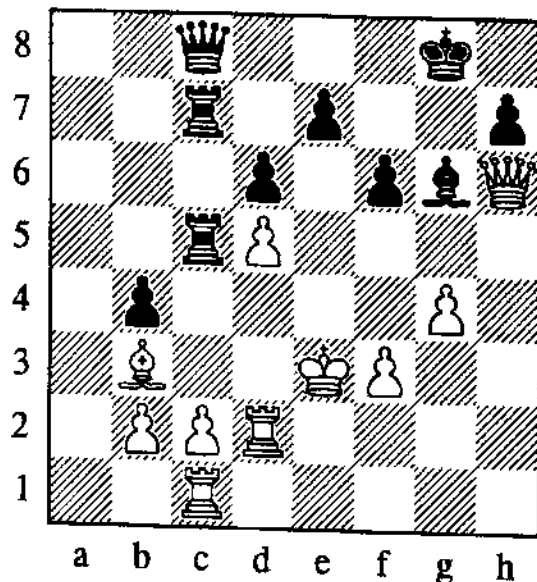
**27...♞c8 28.♞h6!?**

Preparing against ...♙xc2. Let me reiterate that there is no need to memorize all of this; I just want to show that White can make progress even against the most stubborn computer defences.

**28...f6**

28...♙f6 29.♞xf6† ♙xf6 30.f4 and Black will continue to suffer due to his pawn weaknesses.

28...♙xc2 29.♞dxc2 ♞xc2 30.♞h1! is another example where the king proves to be perfectly safe on e3. 30...♞2c3† 31.bxc3 ♞xc3† 32.♔f2+–



**29.♖e2!**

29.♖f2? allows 29...♙xc2!. The king could take a different route with 29.♖f4!?, but it isn't required.

The text move, rather astonishingly, places Black in a form of zugzwang! Every possible move leads to a slight loss of tension which will enable White to either improve his king or advance his f-pawn.

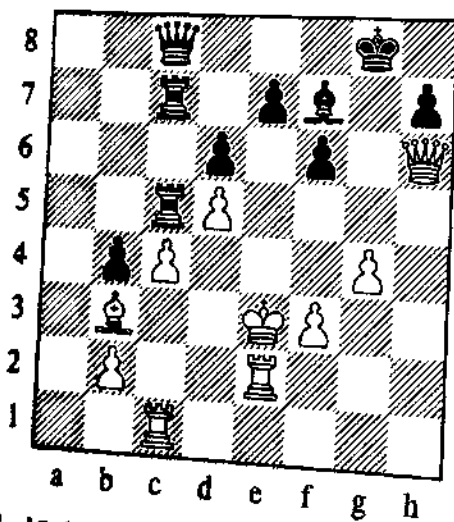
**29...♞a5**

29...♞b7 30.♖f2±

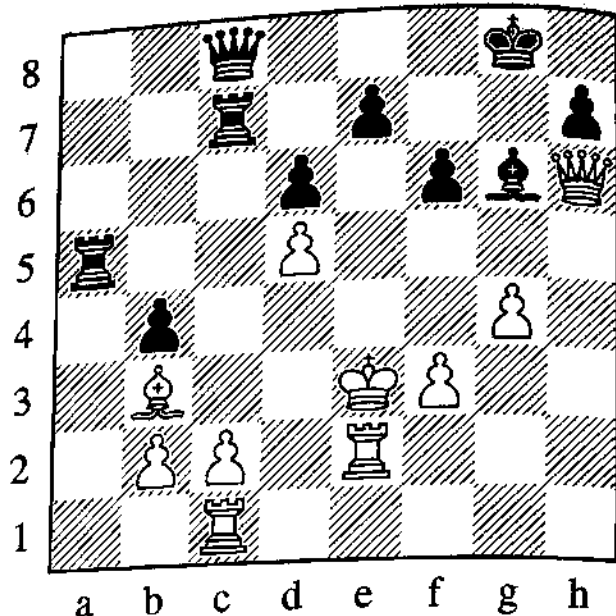
29...♖h8 can be met by 30.f4! since ...♞xg4 is no longer possible.

29...♞f8 30.♞xf8† ♖xf8 31.♞d2 gives White a typical pleasant endgame for this line. His plan involves f4-f5 to shut the bishop out of play, followed by activating the rooks and targeting the b4-pawn.

Finally, 29...♙f7 30.c4! is a nice idea:



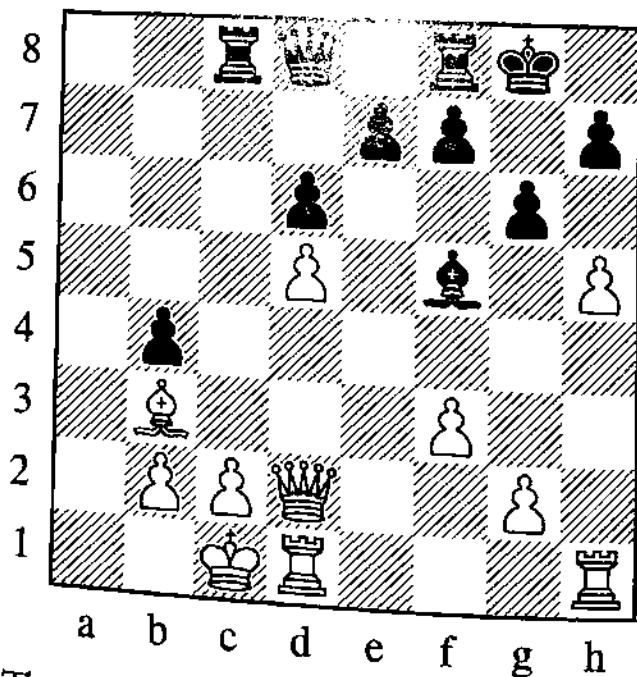
30...♞xd5 (30...bxc3 31.♙c2!+—) 31.♙c2 ♞e5† 32.♖f4! ♞xc4† 33.♖g3± The king reaches its destination and Black must give up the exchange to avoid being mated.

**30.♖f2 ♞f8 31.♞f4**

31.♞xf8† ♖xf8 32.♖e3± is a favourable endgame, but keeping the queens on is more ambitious.

**31...♞b8 32.♖g3±**

White has completed his regrouping, and is ready to combine pressure along the e-file with an advance of his f-pawn.

**C2) 19...♙f5?**

This has only been played a few times, but it is one of the most critical lines in the evaluation of the entire system with 11...♙xd4 and 12...b5. By threatening ...♙xc2, Black tries to provoke ♞xb4 – a move we were trying to

avoid. The bishop also prepares to recapture on g6 to glue the kingside together.

### 20.hxg6!

As we have seen throughout the coverage of 19...♖a5, it is useful for us to force ...♙xc6. True, the bishop gets a stable home where it guards the h7-pawn. However, the problem is that a subsequent ...♙xc2 would leave his kingside completely bare, so White will not have to worry so much about the queenside pawns.

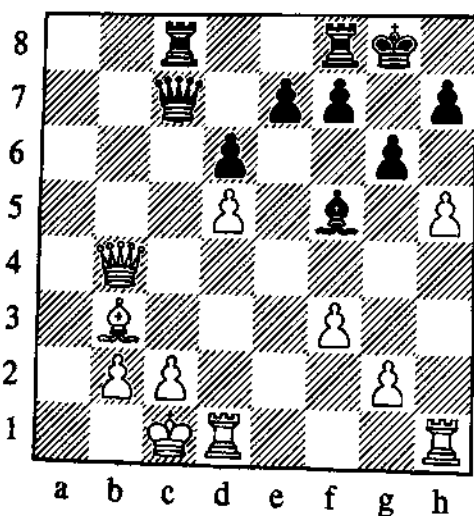
20.♖e3!N is possible. A logical continuation is 20...♖a5 21.♔d2 ♜c5 22.hxg6 ♙xc6, transposing to 21.♖e3!N below.

### 20.♖xb4

Delaying the exchange on g6 may seem like a small difference, but it completely alters the subsequent play. Although I am not recommending this, I will include a few lines to show some of the tactical motifs you should be aware of.

### 20...♖c7!

20...♜b8?! makes less sense without the exchange on g6, as the bishop is unstable on f5. 21.♖c3 ♖b6 22.h6±



### 21.♜d4

21.♔d2N is a critical move to consider, but Black has the amazing defence: 21...♙xc2! 22.♜c1 ♜b8 23.♖a3 ♜a8 24.♖b4 ♜ab8=

In Kaplan – Kostopoulos, Kavala 2011, Black should have played:

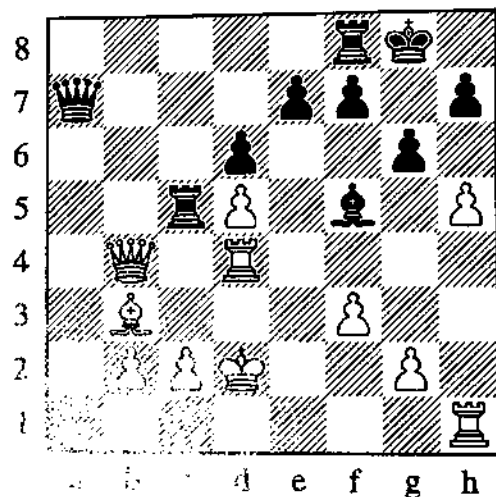
### 21...♖a7N

21...♙xc2? 22.♜c4! is a typical idea in such positions.

### 22.♔d2 ♜c5!

22...♜b8 is met by 23.♖c3! intending ♙c4, when everything is defended and g2-g4 is coming.

The text move leads to complex play, but my general evaluation is that Black has a lot of resources for this type of position. A possible continuation is:



### 23.♙c4±

Giving the queen a square on c3.

### 23...gxh5

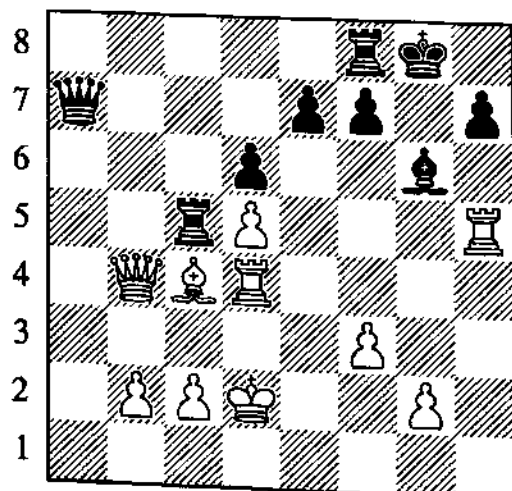
23...♜b8 24.♖c3 gxh5 25.♜xh5 ♙g6 26.♜hh4±

23...♜fc8 24.g4! e5 (24...♙d7 25.b3)

25.dxe6 ♙xe6 26.♙xe6 fxe6 (26...♜xc2†

27.♔e3 fxe6 28.♖xd6±) 27.c3±

24.♜xh5 ♙g6





## C21) 21. ♖e3! ? N

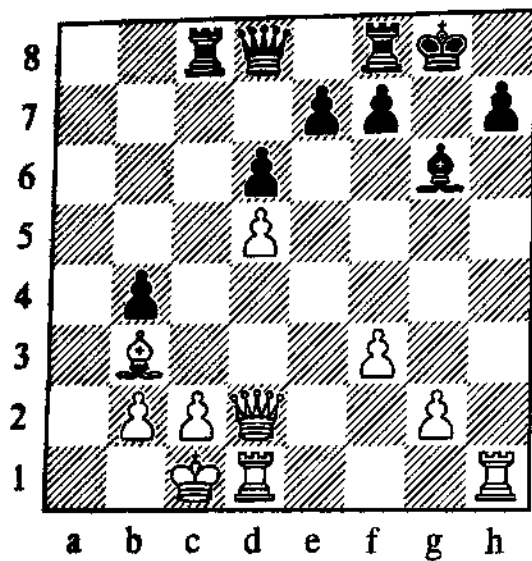
25. ♖h1  
25. ♖h4 ♖b8 26. ♖c3 ♖a1 27. b4 ♖g1 is annoying.

25... ♖b8 26. ♖a3 ♖b6

Black is theoretically fine and, if anything, it would be easier for White to slip up in a practical game.

20... ♖xg6

20... ♖xg6?! is positionally risky. 21. ♖e3! is a good reply, when Black has no way to maintain the bishop on f5.



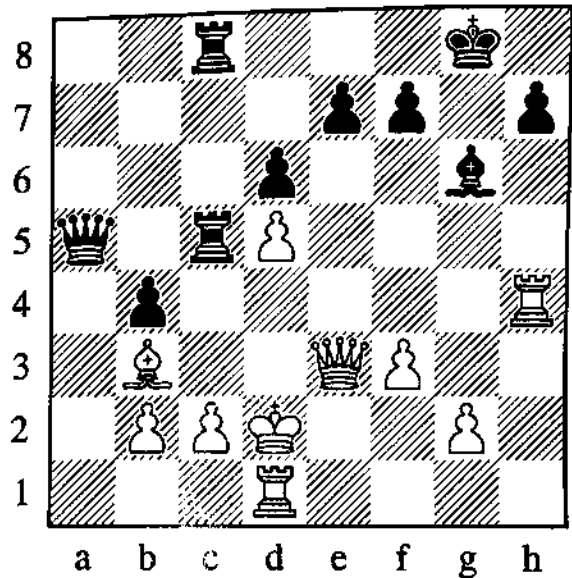
Just as in the earlier variation C1, White will aim to bring his king to safety with ♖d2-e3-f2 and then either pile up the major pieces on the kingside or push the g- and f-pawns. Black still has some pressure against the c2-pawn, and he might be able to capture it if the white king steps on to the wrong square. Black may also aim to meet White's king manoeuvre with a timely ...e5, intending ...♖g5(†) and – if White captures en passant – a rook lift from c5 to e5.

It is worth considering C21) 21. ♖e3! ? N and C22) 21. ♖xb4.

This untested move is an interesting way to avoid capturing the b4-pawn. I will not analyse it exhaustively, but will rather present a few lines as a starting point for further investigations.

21... ♖a5 22. ♖d2 ♖c5 23. ♖h4 ♖fc8

The computer says 23... ♖xc2 is possible, but 24. ♖g4† ♖g6 25. ♖h1 is tricky for Black.



24. ♖e2! ?

24. ♖dh1?? ♖xc2† would be disastrous, while 24. ♖e1 ♖xc2 25. ♖xc2 ♖xc2 26. ♖f1 b3 27. ♖g1 ♖xb2 is also of no concern to Black.

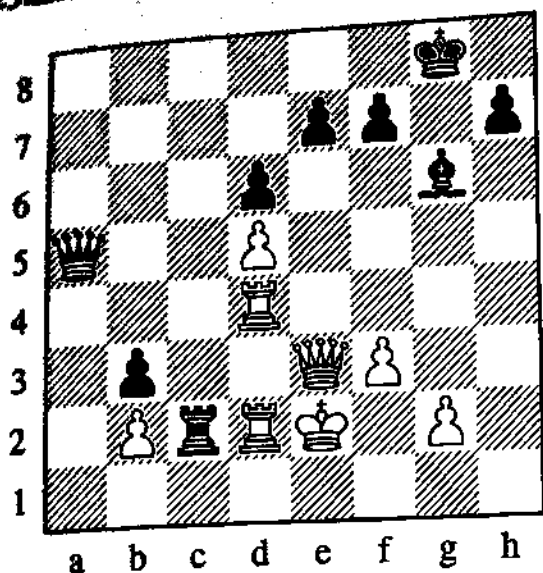
The text move reaches a key position, which may prove critical for the assessment of White's 21st move.

24... ♖xc2†

24... ♖5c7 can be met by 25. ♖f2± (or 25. ♖h6!?) when White can be happy.

24... ♖xc2 25. ♖f2! ♖a7 26. ♖g3 ♖g6 27. ♖dd4  
Although Black seems solid right now, White's king has come to safety and we have several active possibilities, so Black's life is far from easy.

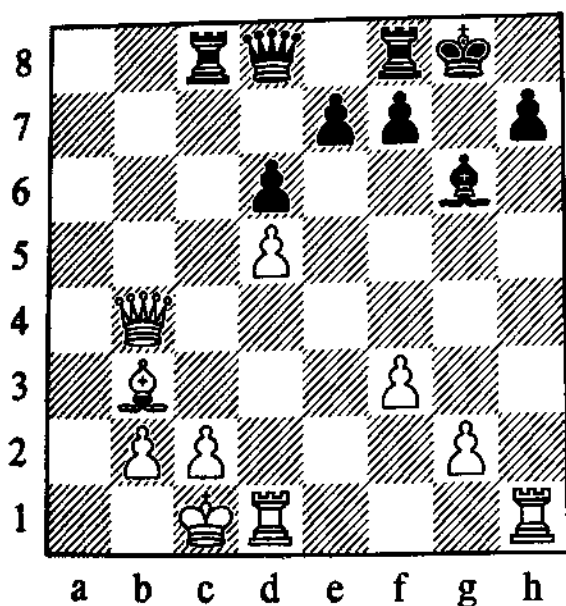
25. ♖xc2 ♖xc2† 26. ♖d2 b3 27. ♖hd4



27... ♖a2 28. ♖b4 ♖xb2 29. ♖xc2 ♖xc2†  
30. ♖f1 ♖d1† 31. ♖f2 ♖xd5 32. ♖xb3

Despite having two pawns for the exchange, Black's exposed king means that he is not yet fully equal, and White can keep pressing for a while longer.

C22) 21. ♖xb4!?



This is the more principled continuation; since Black did not play ... ♖a5, we will try and punish him. It might seem that the lines ahead are somewhat arbitrary computer-generated analysis. Indeed, this is partly true – but I feel it is more the case from Black's perspective. On

White's side we will see logical moves aiming to consolidate the position with an extra pawn, and he often has several playable options. Black, on the other hand, will have to walk a tightrope of computer variations in order to survive.

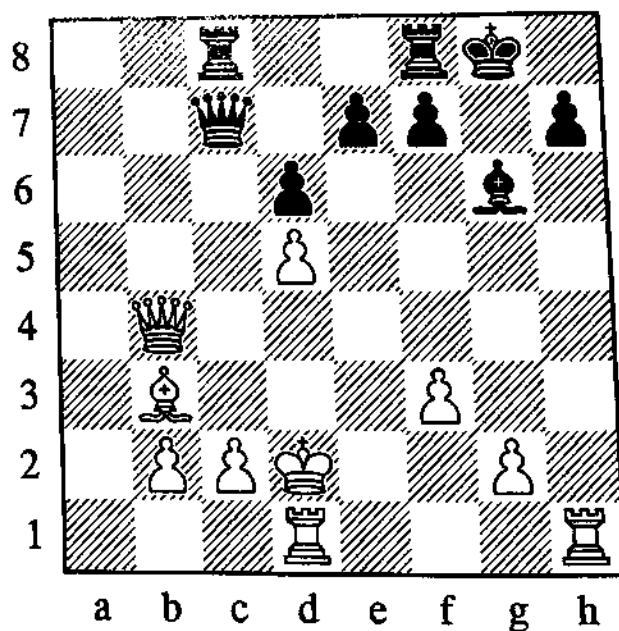
C221) 21... ♖c7 is a natural move to consider, but the untested C222) 21... ♖b8!N is more accurate.

C221) 21... ♖c7 22. ♖d2!N

White utilizes the possibility of a pin to indirectly defend the c2-pawn.

22. ♖d4 was played in D. Ledger – R. Pert, Hastings 2011. This move also defends c2, but does so in a more awkward way. 22... ♖a7N 23. ♖d2 ♖c5! is a good reply, intending 24. ♖c4 ♖fc8 25. b3? e6! when White is in trouble.

22. c4?! can sometimes be considered, but here White lacks a follow-up threat such as g2-g4, and 22... ♖a6! gives Black a dangerous initiative.

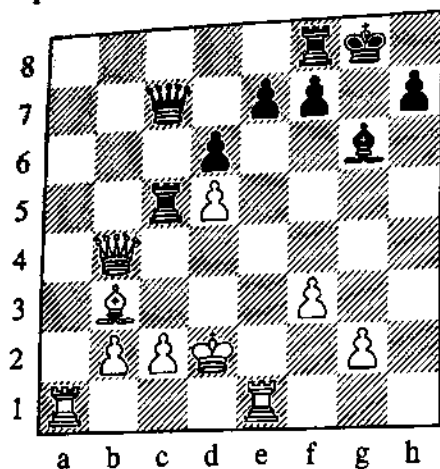


22... ♖a7

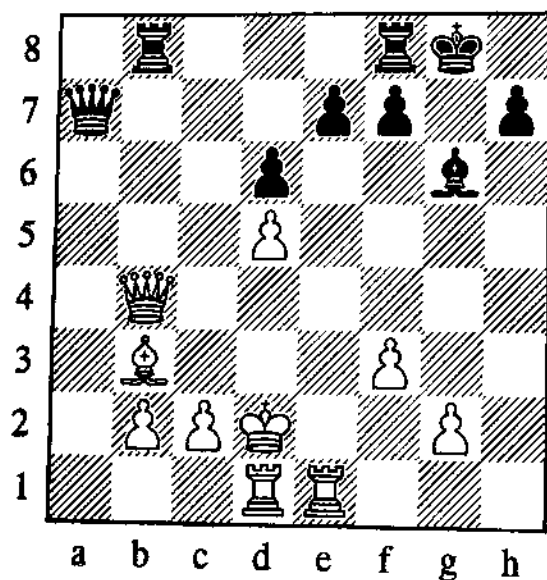
22... ♖xc2? is refuted by 23. ♖c1 of course.

23. ♖he1 ♖b8!?

23...♖c5 is a more typical but slower plan, which gives White time for an effective regrouping: 24.♖a1 ♜c7



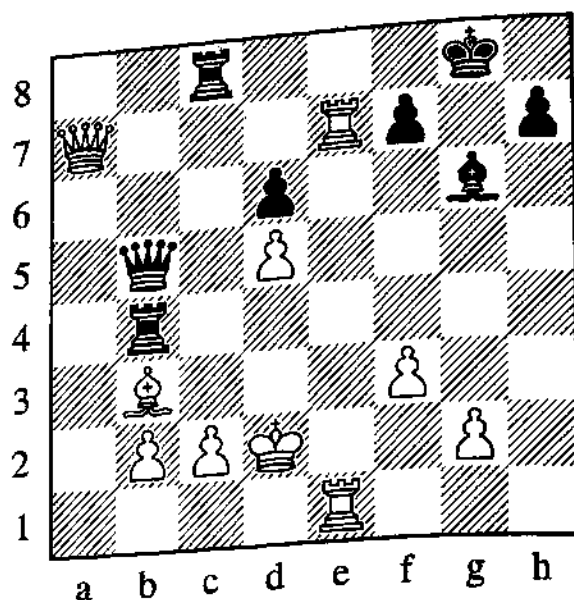
25.c4! ♜b8 (Also after 25...♖c8 26.♖e3 it is hard for Black to create further play. He could aim for ...e6, but opening up his own king may well backfire.) 26.♜c3± It is not clear how Black can demonstrate compensation. White will continue consolidating with ♖e3, followed by walking his king to g1.



24.♜a4 ♜f2†

24...♜c5 25.♖xe7 is the same thing.

25.♖e2 ♜c5 26.♖xe7 ♜fc8 27.♖de1 ♜b4 28.♜a7 ♜b5



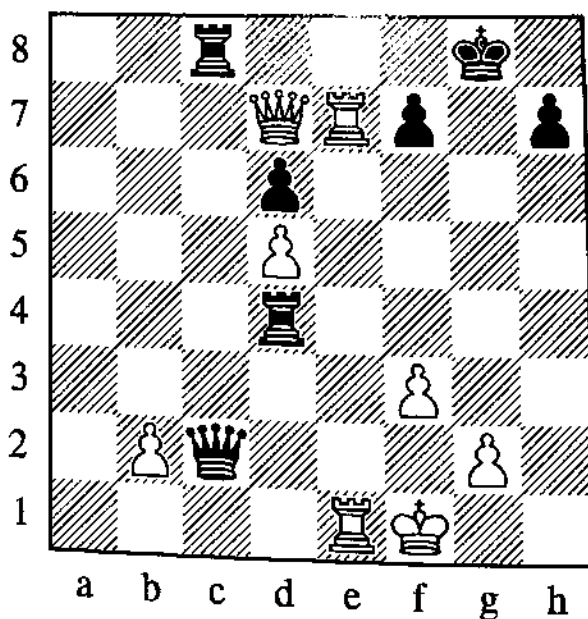
29.♜d7!

29.♜e3 allows 29...♖xb3! 30.♜xb3 ♖xc2† 31.♜xc2 ♜xd5† 32.♙c1 ♙xc2 33.♙xc2 ♜c4† 34.♙d2 ♜d4† 35.♙e2 ♜xb2† 36.♙f1 when Black should be able to hold, although in a practical game White could keep playing.

29...♖d4† 30.♙e3 ♜c5 31.♙e2!

Once the king reaches safety, the game will be one-sided.

31...♙xc2 32.♙xc2 ♜xc2† 33.♙f1

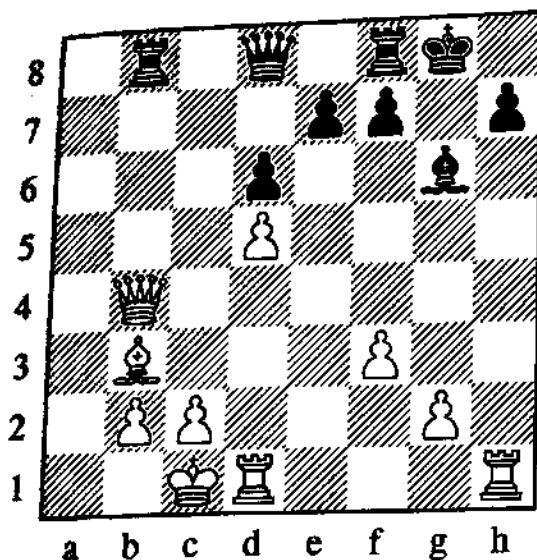


33...♜c4†

Black should include this check, as 33...♖xd5 allows 34.♜g4† ♙f8 35.♖xf7†! ♙xf7 36.♜e6†± with an extra pawn and good winning chances.

34. Qd2 Rxd5 35. R7e4 Qc5† 36. Qg3†  
With the safer king and a potentially strong passed b-pawn, White can continue pressing with no risk.

C222) 21...Rb8!N



This offers the sternest resistance. Black exploits some tactical nuances to force the queen to retreat to a slightly inferior square.

22. Qc3!

Preventing ...Qa5.

22. Qd4?! runs into 22...e5! with the following point: 23. dxe6? Rxb3! 24. cxb3 Qg5† 25. Rxd2 (25. f4 Rxc8†→) 25...Ra8 26. exf7 Rxf7 White is in serious trouble.

22. Qh4 Qa5 23. Rxd4!? borrows an idea from Negi – Konguvel as referenced on page 42, but after 23...Qa1† 24. Qd2 Qxb2 25. Rg4 Qg7!= Black manages to defend.

22...Qb6

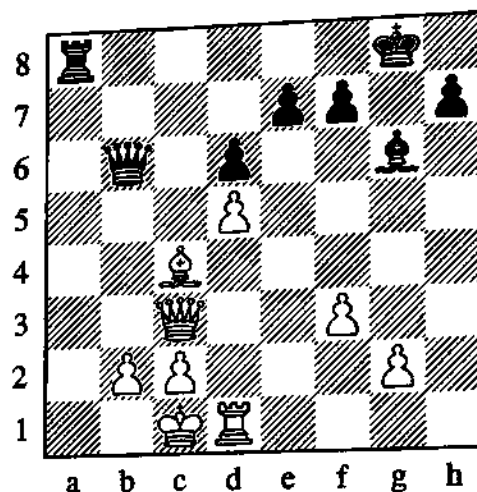
Black activates his queen and makes way for the second rook to join the action.

23. Rd4

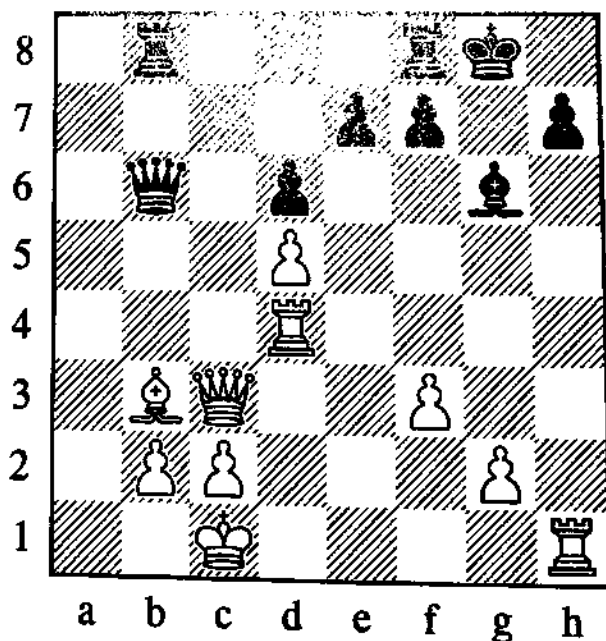
This is a typical way to consolidate. The rook blocks the queen's path to f2, thereby

preparing Qd2. A second point is to support Qc4 in some lines.

23. Rb4!? is another example showing the incredible depth of options available in these positions. 23...Rfc8 (23...Qf2 24. Rxc4! Qxg2 25. Qa4 Ra8 26. b3 sees White seal up the queenside before turning to the other wing: 26...h5 27. Qb2 Rfb8 28. Re1 Ra7 29. Qe3 Rba8 30. Rg1→) 24. Rxc4 Rxc4 25. Qxc4 Ra8



26. Re1!? (26. Rf1 Ra1† 27. Qd2 Rxf1 28. Qxf1 Qf2† 29. Qe2 Qxg2=) 26...Ra1† 27. Qd2 Qf2† 28. Re2 Qa7 (28...Qg1 29. Qe3 Qd1† 30. Qc3 Ra8 31. Qxc7 Rxc8 32. Qe3!±) Somehow the computer manages to maintain equality for Black, based on precise tactical play.



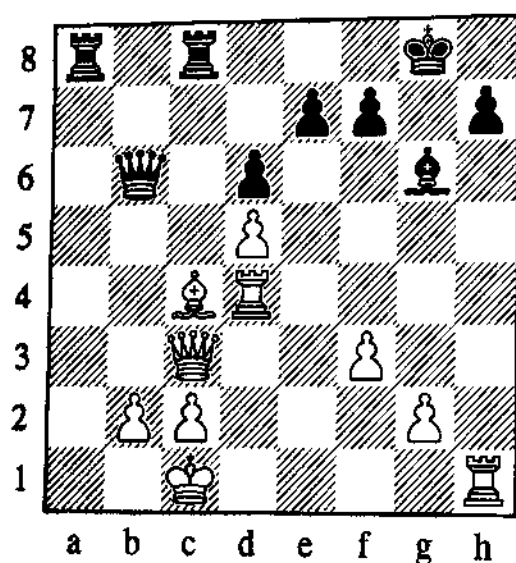
23...Rfc8 24. Qc4

White should avoid the temptation to trade rooks, as 24.♖c4 ♖xc4 25.♗xc4 ♜f2! is fine for Black.

Planting the bishop on c4 is a typical way to block the queenside. Now White is ready to improve his position with ♔d2 (prefaced by b2-b3 if necessary) followed by walking the king to the kingside – perhaps throwing in ♖e1 somewhere along the way. Black has no obvious targets to attack, and must instead shuffle his pieces around in a way that interferes with White's plans, which is not an easy thing to do when the clock is ticking. If and when the white king reaches safety, White will not only have an extra pawn, but also attacking chances with g2-g4 and f3-f4, rather like the earlier variation C1.

#### 24...♖a8

In the event of 24...f6?! 25.♖e1 ♔f7 26.b3± White is perfectly placed to carry out his plan.



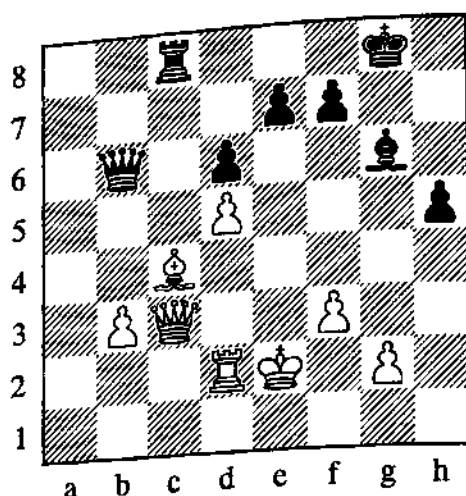
#### 25.♔d2

I also considered 25.♖hd1!? but I don't think it is any stronger than the text move, and most players will surely prefer the logical plan of evacuating the king immediately.

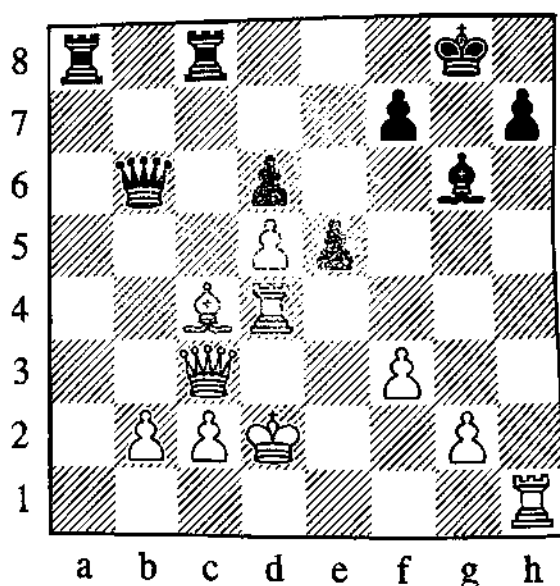
#### 25...e5!

A crucial move. If Black continues slowly, White will have a pleasant game.

25...♖a4 26.b3 ♖a2 27.♖c1 h5 28.♔e2! Returning the extra pawn to reclaim the initiative. 28...♖xc2† 29.♖xc2 ♗xc2 30.♖d2 ♗g6



31.♖e3!? (31.♖d4!?) 31...♖b8 (After 31...♖xe3† 32.♔xe3± the b-pawn may prove dangerous in the endgame) 32.♔f2 ♖c7 33.♖a2 White can continue improving his position.



#### 26.dxe6 d5!

Considering that Black's novelty came on move 21, it would take an incredibly well-prepared (or tactically gifted) opponent to make it this far. Even here, White has a choice of interesting lines.

#### 27.♖xh7!

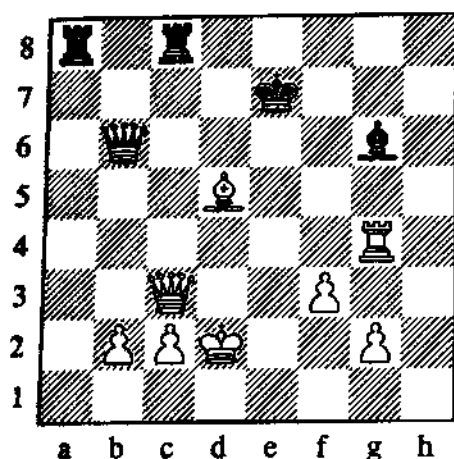
27.exf7† ♔f8 reaches another crazy position where the computer proposes 28.b3 ♖a2

29. Bb3! as White's best. By this stage the position has crossed too far into the realm of computer-generated tactics for my taste. You can of course analyse this in more depth, but I will focus on the continuation that makes more sense to me.

27...f6!!

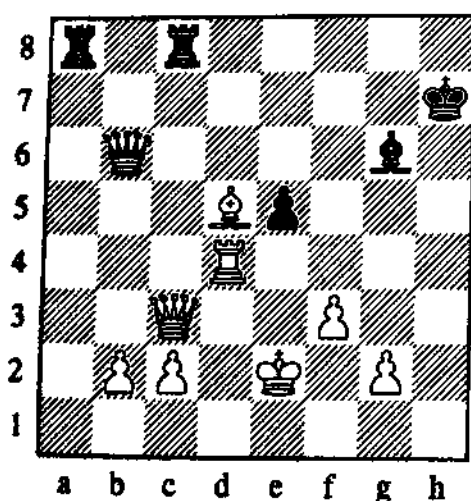
Wow!

27...Qxh7? loses: 28. Bg4+ Qg6 29. exf7+ Qxf7 30. Qxd5+ Qe7



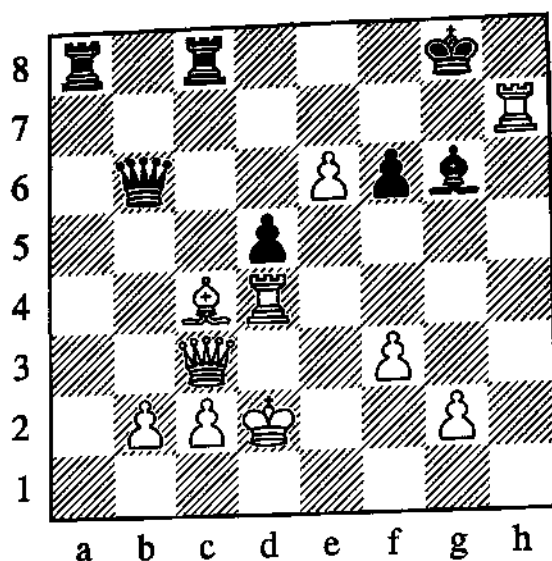
31. Bg7+ Qd8 32. Bd4!+- Catching the king while preventing ...Bf2+.

27...fxe6 is not a disaster, but nor is it much fun for Black: 28. Qe2 e5 29. Qxd5+ Qxh7



30. Bh4+ Qg7 31. Bxe5+ Bf6 32. Bxf6+ Qxf6 33. Qxa8 Bxa8 34. c3± White has four pawns against a bishop. The pawns are a long way

back so Black may well be able to hold, but it will be a joyless task for him.



28. Bb6 Qf5

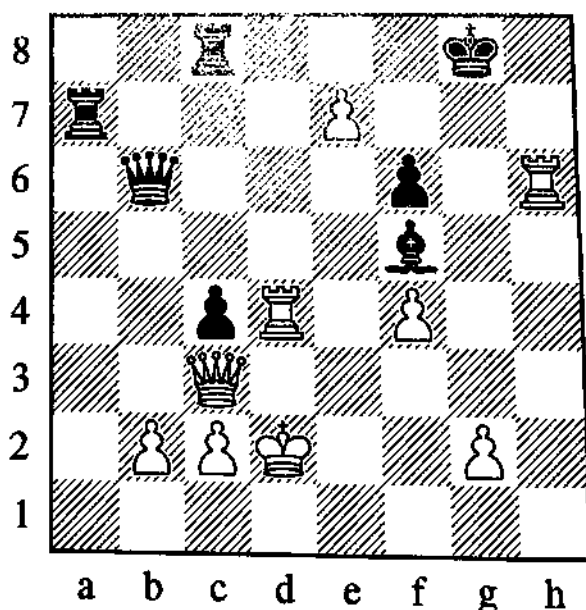
The position remains ridiculously complicated even now, but the computer assures us it's '0.00'.

29. f4 Ba7 30. e7

30. b3 dxc4 31. Bxf6 Bd8 32. Bxd8+ Qxd8+ 33. Qe1 Qxc2 should also end in a draw.

30...dxc4

30...Qxe7? 31. Bg3! Bg7 32. Qxd5+ wins.



31. g4 Bd7 32. Bxd7 Bf2+ 33. Qc1 Qxd7 34. Bxf6 Bf1+ 35. Qd2 Bf2+=

The complications finally result in perpetual check.

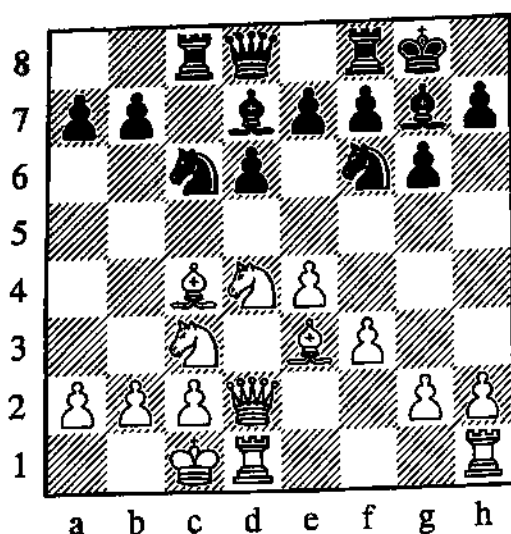
### Conclusion

11...♖xd4 12.♗xd4 b5 is a popular system these days, and after 13.♖d5 ♖xd5 14.♗xg7 ♗xg7 15.exd5 a5 16.a3 we reach a major branching point. 16...♞b6 has some positional drawbacks, and I also like White's chances after 16...b4 17.axb4 axb4 18.h4!?

Most experts on Black's side prefer 16...♗g8!, when 17.h4 b4 18.axb4 axb4 19.h5 reaches another critical position. 19...♞a5 is a logical move, but we can put Black under serious pressure by combining a gradual evacuation of the king towards the kingside with threats against Black's king and targeting his weak pawns. The most critical line of all is 19...♗f5!? 20.hxg6! ♗xg6 21.♞xb4!? ♞b8!N when Black must rely on some amazing computer-generated ideas to survive. At the moment I would regard the main line of variation C222 as a great choice for White in a practical game, as it would be practically impossible for an opponent to find the necessary defensive ideas over the board. Of course, once my analysis has been published and maybe played a few times, some players will start to memorize the details of Black's defence. If that should happen, there are plenty of other playable options you can consider, 21.♞e3 being one example.



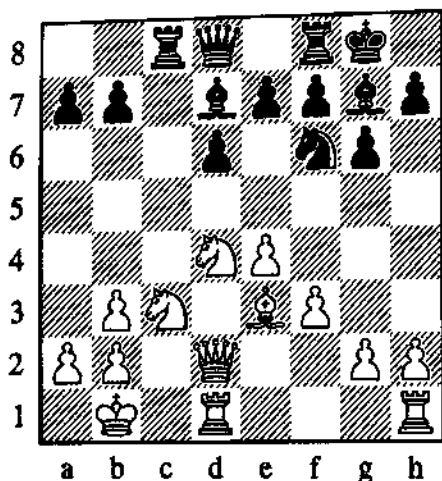
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘f6  
 5.♙c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♖d2 ♘c6  
 9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♖c8



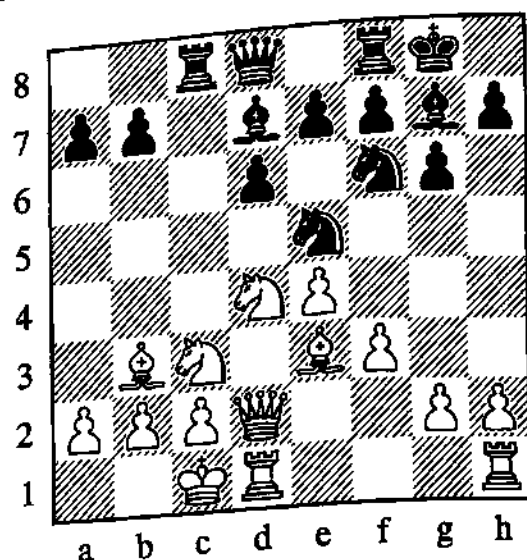
This move takes us towards the traditional main lines of the Dragon.

### 11.♙b3 ♘e5

11...♘a5 is usually considered a dubious alternative. It may transpose after a subsequent ...♙c4, but if Black wishes to delay this move then the knight is less useful on a5 than e5. Black does get the additional option of exchanging on b3, but after cxb3 (or even axb3) it will be much harder for him to generate a queenside attack. 12.♙b1 is the simplest reply. (12.g4!? is an interesting attempt to exploit Black's last move; with the knight on e5, this move could be met by ...b5, taking advantage of the pressure on the f3-pawn, but now Black must try something else.) 12...♙xb3 (12...♙c4 leads to the next chapter) 13.cxb3!



One of the points of ♙b1 is that ...b5 is no longer possible. White is ready to march forwards on the kingside and Black's counterplay will be far too slow. A sample continuation is: 13...♖a5 14.g4 b5 15.♙d5 ♖d8 16.♙xf6+ ♙xf6 17.h4→



### 12.♙b1

12.h4 has been played in more games, but the text move has taken over as the main line in recent years. White improves his king before deciding whether the h- or g-pawn should be pushed first.

We will analyse A) 12...b5, B) 12...a5, C) 12...a6 and D) 12...♖e8, the last of which is the most challenging.

12...♙c4 is the main line, and will be analysed separately in the next chapter.

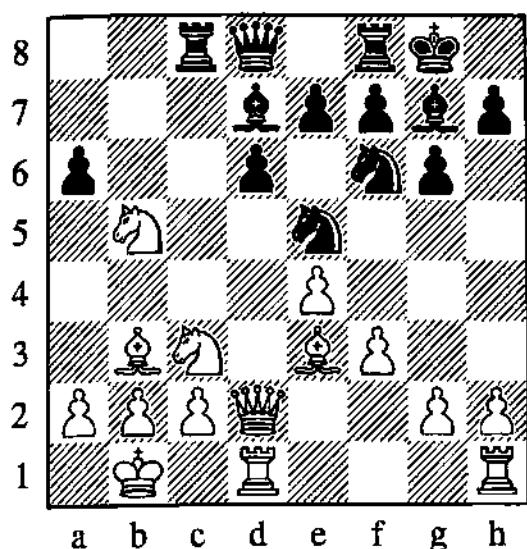
### A) 12...b5

Strangely enough, Black has won a few games at GM level with this move, yet nobody seems to want to play it. The reason will soon become clear: as long as White remembers to retreat the knight to a3 rather than d4, in order to prevent counterplay with ...♙c4, Black will be left a pawn down for nothing.

**13.♟dxb5 a6**

13...♟c4 14.♙xc4 ♜xc4 15.e5! dxe5 16.♟d5!  
saw White win material in Norrelykke – A.W. Larsen, email 2011.

13...♙xb5 14.♟xb5 a6 15.♟a3!± was great for White in H.A. Ivanov – Prickett, email 2006.

**14.♟a3!**

14.♟d4 ♟c4 15.♙xc4 ♜xc4 gives Black some attacking chances for the pawn deficit. One game continued: 16.h4 ♞b8 17.♟de2 ♞fc8 18.♙d4 h5 19.♞c1 ♞b4 20.b3 ♞xd4! 21.♟xd4 ♞b4 22.♟de2 ♟e8! Black eventually prevailed in Yu – Le Quang, Subic Bay 2009.

**14...♙e6 15.h4N**

15.♟d5 led to success for White in Bucher – Doran, Canterbury 2010, but the text move seems simpler to me. A possible continuation is:

**15...♟c4 16.♟xc4 ♙xc4 17.e5±****B) 12...a5 13.a4!**

It may look as though White has weakened his queenside, but he has eliminated the ...b5 break, which is one of Black's most important avenues for counterplay. White should be able to claim a clear advantage, but be warned –

it is essential to move the correct knight as explained at move 17 below.

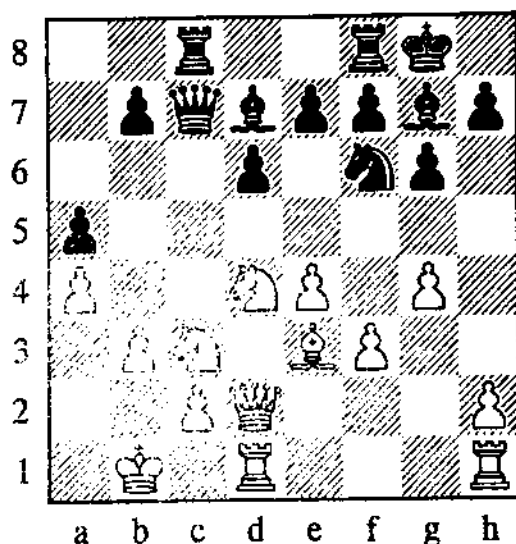
**13...♟c4 14.♙xc4 ♜xc4 15.b3 ♞c8**

15...♞b4 16.g4 ♙c6 occurred in Gofshtein – Sorkin, Internet (blitz) 2003, and now 17.♟a2+– would have forced Black to give up either the exchange or the a5-pawn (after 17...♞b6).

**16.g4 ♞c7!**

16...♙c6 17.h4 h5 18.♙h6 ♙d7 is a dreadful loss of time, and after 19.♟d5 hxg4 20.h5 White's attack was unstoppable in Nisipeanu – Gheng, Eforie Nord 1999.

The text move sets a nasty trap.

**17.♟cb5!**

17.♟db5 ♟xe4! is Black's amazing idea. After 18.♟xe4 ♙xb5 19.axb5 d5! 20.♟f2 a4! the position is spinning out of control. White lost the plot and the game after 21.b6? ♞c6 22.♞c1 axb3+ in Cornette – T.L. Petrosian, Heraklio 2002.

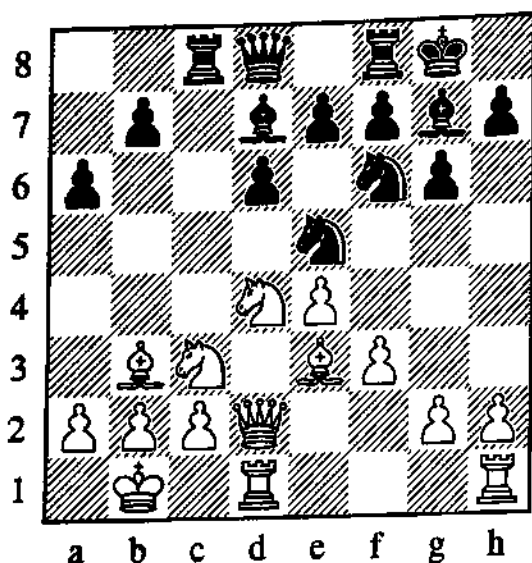
**17...♞d8**

The simplest way to underline White's advantage is:

**18.c4N±**

There is no obvious way for Black to generate counterplay, while White's kingside offensive is ready to start. I will also mention 18. Qa7!? ♖a8 19. Qdb5 as a weird but effective way to quell any attack. It worked perfectly in the following correspondence game: 19... ♗e6 20. h4 h5 21. gxf5 Qxf5 22. ♖hg1 ♔h7 23. f4 Qf6 24. h5 Qxf5 25. f5 → Povchanic – Elison, corr. 2006.

### C) 12...a6



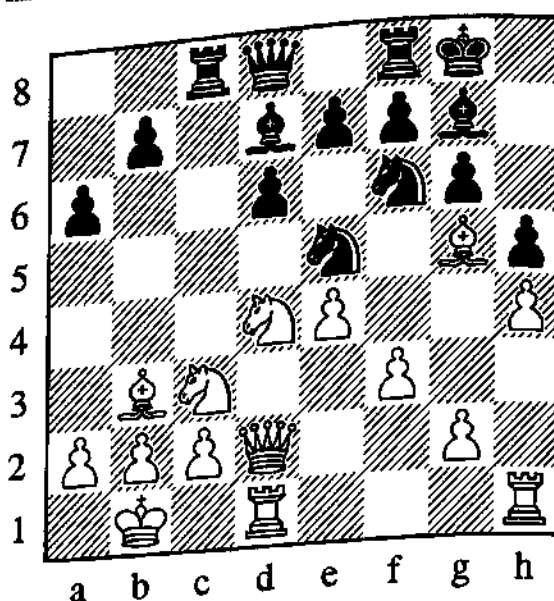
This has been surprisingly popular, but it can be considered an inferior cousin of the 12... ♗e8 line which will be examined next. The idea in both cases is to play a useful waiting move while planning to meet h2-h4 with ...h5. I find it strange that ...a6 would be considered a useful move though, as it just seems too slow.

### 13. h4 h5 14. ♗g5!

This gives us a favourable version of the Soltis Variation with 12. h4 h5 13. ♗g5, which used to be the main line before the strength of 12. ♔b1 became apparent. The most popular continuation is 13... ♗c5 14. ♔b1, when Black generally continues with 14... b5 or 14... ♗e8. No clear conclusion has been reached, but generally Black seems to be holding his own in the insane complications that may ensue.

If we compare this to the present position,

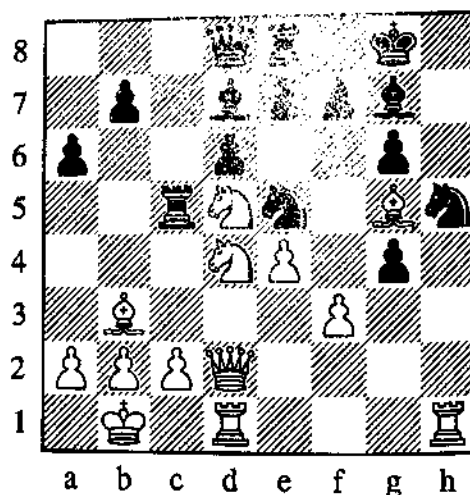
we see that Black's rook has yet to move to c5. White has already played the useful ♔b1, while Black's ...a6 is of questionable value.



### 14...b5

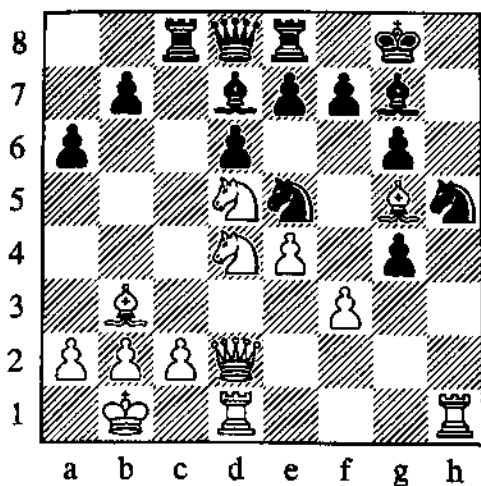
This seems like the only way to make sense of the ...a6 move, but it doesn't achieve much.

14... ♗c5 leaves Black virtually a tempo down on the Soltis. 15. g4 hxg4 16. h5 Qxf5 17. Qd5 ♗e8

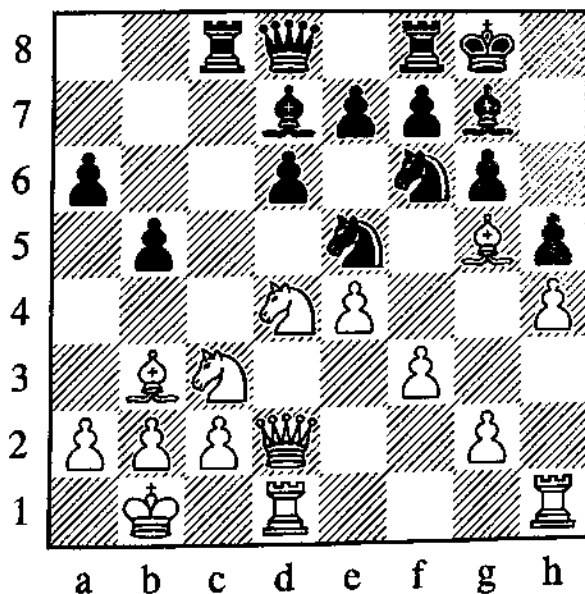


18. ♗dg1! N± Black hasn't even started his attack, while White already has serious threats on the kingside. (18. ♗xh5!? gxf5 19. ♗h2 led to crazy complications in Mchedlishvili – Javakhadze, Nakhchivan 2013. Usually I would be inclined to explore such a position further, but the exchange sacrifice is simply not required.)

14...♞e8 15.g4! h×g4 16.h5 ♜xh5 occurred in Lana Prieto – Andres Gonzales, Asturias 1993. After 17.♞d5!N White's initiative is too strong, for instance:



17...a5 18.f×g4 ♞xg4 (18...♞xg4 19.♞dgl a4 20.♞xa4 ♞xa4 21.♞xg4±) 19.♞dgl b5 20.♞e3±



### 15.g4 h×g4

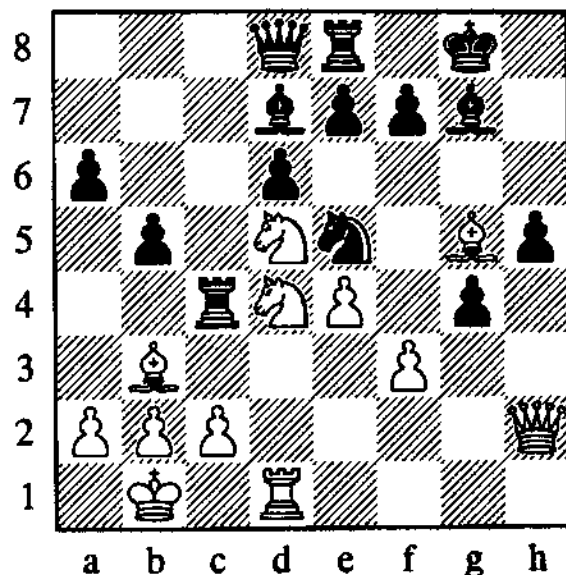
15...a5N would be a common position with ...♞c5 included, but it is hard to believe it can be much good for Black a whole tempo down. Both 16.g×h5 ♜xh5 17.♞d5 and 16.♞xf6 followed by g×h5 look good for White.

### 16.h5 ♜xh5 17.♞d5 ♞e8 18.♞xh5!

There may be other good moves, but this is the most brutal way through.

### 18...g×h5 19.♞h2 ♞c4

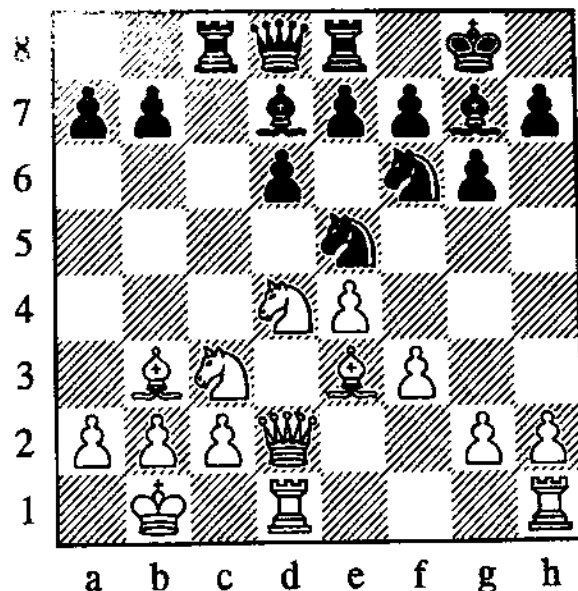
19...g×f3 20.♞xh5 ♞g4 21.♞h4 would have led to the same result.



20.♞xh5 f6 21.f4 f×g5 22.f×e5 d×e5 23.♞f5 ♞xf5 24.exf5

1-0 Canamas Soler – Jimenez Molina, corr. 2013

### D) 12...♞e8



This move, along with 12...a6, was championed by Carlsen himself, and enjoyed a brief period in vogue. Eventually the interest died down, although it wasn't clear from the games if White had actually found a clear refutation.

**13.h4 h5 14.g4**

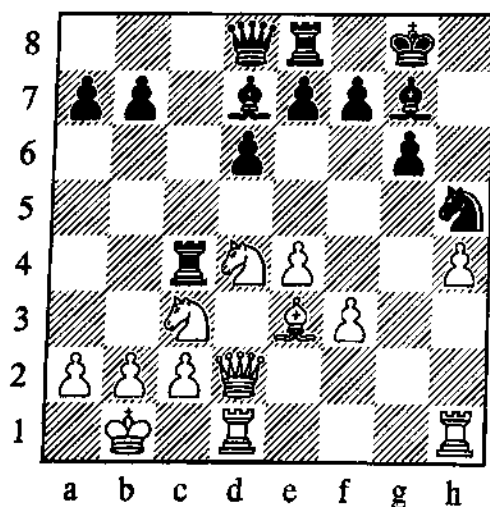
The most blunt approach. Almost everybody playing the Yugoslav Attack has seen this idea: ...hxc4 is met by h4-h5, and ...dxc5 by g4, threatening fxc5 and hoping to open up the entire kingside.

Most of the debate in Carlsen's and other top players' games had focused on more restrained strategies like 14.g4, as it was believed that Black had enough resources against the blunt attacking approach. However, there were a lot of new ideas waiting to be discovered.

**14...hxc4**

Allowing gxc4 is never a bright idea. 14...Qa5 15.gxc4 dxc4 16.Bhg1 is one such example, with good attacking chances for White.

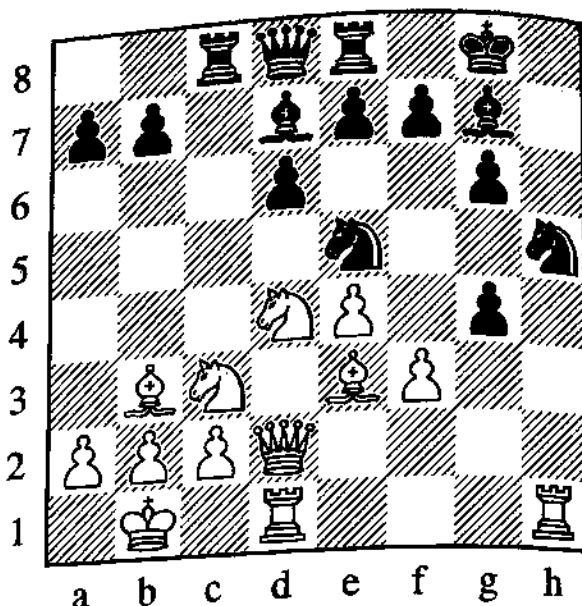
14...dxc4 15.gxc4 Bxc4 16.gxh5 (16.g5!? d7 17.f4± is also promising, but opening the g-file is so much more tempting) 16...dxc5 White has many ways to continue. My choice was:



17.Bdg1 e6 18.dde2 d5 19.g4 → Negi – Shinkevich, St Petersburg 2009.

**15.h5 dxc5**

15...dxc4 16.gxc4 Bxc4 gives White a pleasant choice: 17.hxc6 (17.h6!? f8 18.fxc6 g4 [18...dxc6 19.f3 dxe3 20.Qxe3] 19.Bdf1 →) 17...fxg6 18.g4 dxc4 19.fxc4 Bxd4 20.Qh2 Bxd1† 21.dxd1 →

**16.g4**

We have reached our first big juncture. Black's three main tries are D1) 16...g7, D2) 16...f6 and D3) 16...e6!.

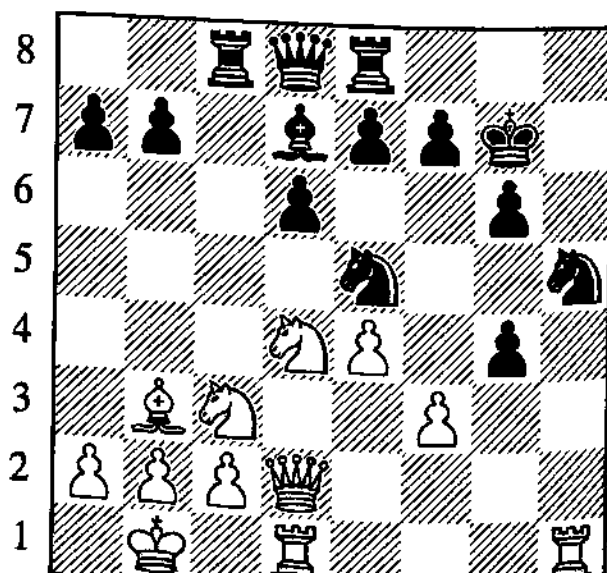
16...Bxc3?! 17.bxc3 doesn't help.

16...g8? allows 17.Bxh5! dxc4 18.gxc4 Bxc4 19.Bd5 and White is winning.

**D1) 16...g7**

This is a typical idea in these positions, investing a tempo to force White to release the tension between the bishops. On this occasion, however, White has an easy way to deal with it.

17.gxg7 Qxg7



**18.fg4!**

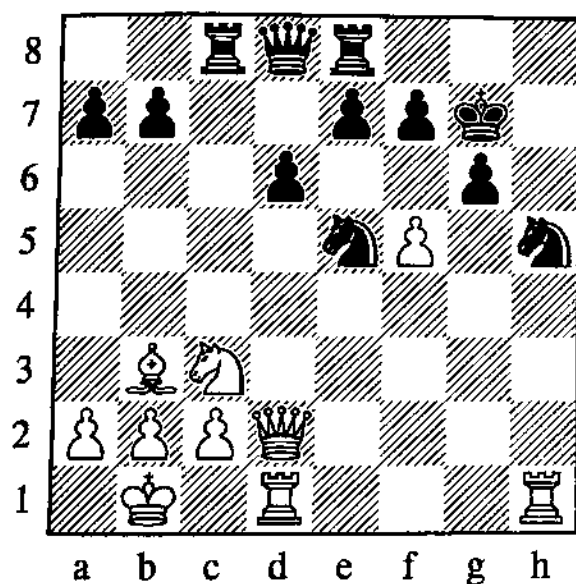
18. ♖xh5 gxh5 19. ♖g5† ♖g6 20. ♖f5† ♖xf5  
21. exf5 e6! sees Black defend successfully.

**18... ♖g4 19. ♖f5†! ♖xf5**

19... gxf5? 20. ♖g5† ♖g6 (20... ♖f8 21. ♖h6†  
♖g8 22. ♖xh5 ♖xh5 23. ♖g1†+–) 21. exf5 ♖xd1  
22. ♖xf7! wins.

**20.exf5**

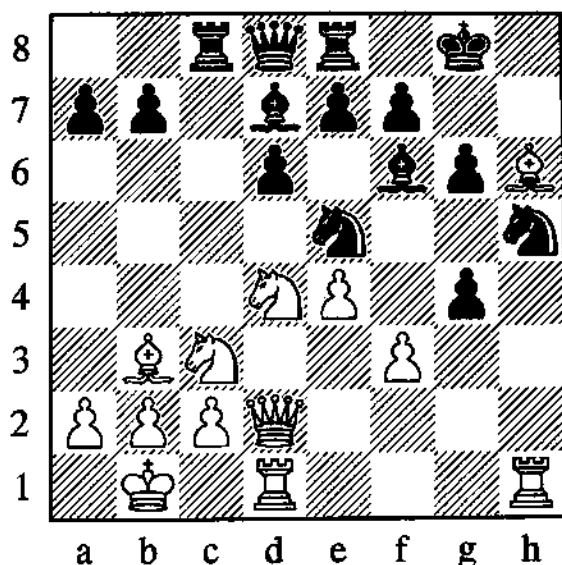
The open nature of the position makes Black's life much harder, especially with the deadly bishop on b3. White's knight is also ready to jump all over the place from e4, while his rooks have so, so many targets.

**20... ♖h8 21.fg6 ♖xg6 22. ♖d5!?**

22. ♖e4 also led to success for White in an elite-level game: 22... ♖f6 23. ♖df1 ♖xh1  
24. ♖xh1 d5 25. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 26. ♖f2† ♖g7  
27. ♖f1 f6 28. ♖f5 ♖c6 29. ♖g1+– Radjabov –  
Kasimdzhanov, Elista 2008.

22... ♖f6 23. c3 ♖xd5 24. ♖xh8 ♖xh8  
25. ♖xd5 ♖e8 26. ♖f1 e6 27. ♖xb7 a5  
28. ♖a4+

White's initiative was worth much more than Black's extra pawn in Riccio – Taylor, corr. 2008.

**D2) 16... ♖f6**

Another critical variation, but it strikes me as being difficult to play for Black.

**17. ♖d5!?**

Just planning to eliminate the Dragon bishop.

**17... gxf3**

Back may also try:

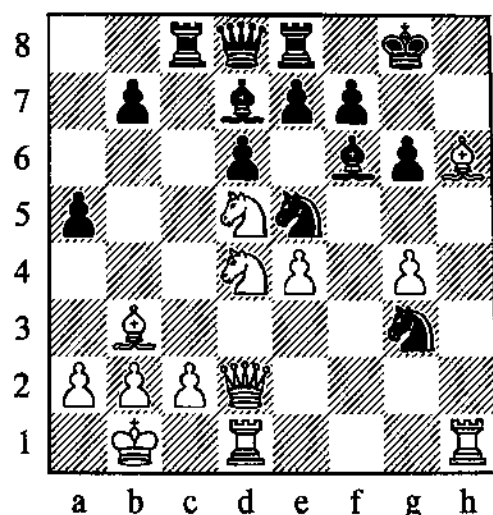
**17... ♖c5 18.fg4!?**

18. ♖xf6† exf6 19. ♖dg1 a4 20. ♖d5 can be met by 20... ♖c5! intending ... ♖xd5.

**18... ♖g3**

18... ♖xg4 19. ♖dg1 gives White great attacking chances.

18... ♖xg4 19. ♖xf6† (19. ♖f5 a4) 19... exf6  
(19... ♖hxf6 20. ♖g5†) 20. ♖f5 with a strong initiative.



19. ♖h2! ♜xh1 20. ♜xf6†

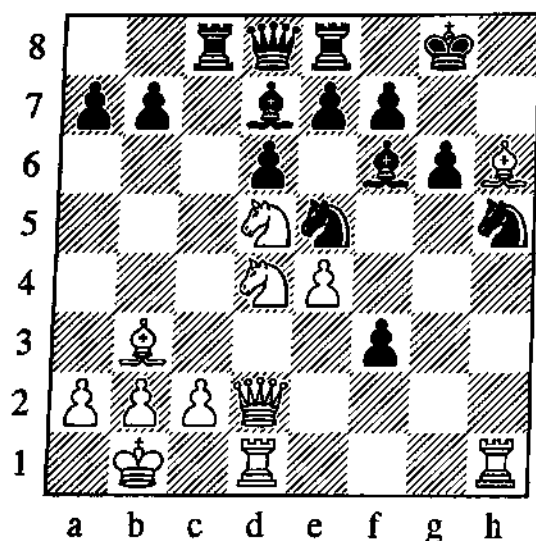
20. ♖xh1 e6 could be analysed further, but I would take the opportunity to change the structure.

20...exf6 21. ♖xh1 ♙g4 22. ♜f5 ♙h5

Both 22...♙xf5 and 22...gxf5 allow the decisive 23. ♙g7!.

23. ♖g2 ♜g4 24. ♙f4→

Black has avoided an immediate disaster, but he will have a hard time withstanding the next wave of the assault.



### 18. ♖dg1!

This is an unforcing, simple strategy – the kind of move you might intuitively opt for during a game.

Depending on your personal taste, you may prefer the alternative:

18. ♜xf6†!?

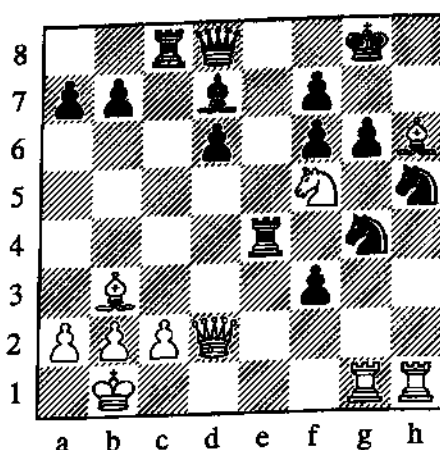
This is much more forcing. It may even be objectively stronger, but it leads to murkier positions which demand more precision than the text move.

18...exf6

18...♜xf6 19. ♖dg1→

19. ♖dg1 ♜g4 20. ♜f5 ♖xe4

White only has one route to an advantage.



21. ♙xf7†!

21. ♖d5 ♖e8!→

21. ♜xd6 only leads to equality: 21...♖e2!

(21...f2 22. ♙xf7† ♜h7 transposes to the

main line below) 22. ♙xf7† ♜h8 23. ♖d3

♙f5 24. ♜xf5 ♖xd3 25. cxd3 f2 26. ♖f1 ♜xh6

27. ♙xg6 ♖cc2 28. ♖xh5 ♖xb2+=

21...♜h7 22. ♜xd6 f2! 23. ♙xg6† ♜xg6

24. ♖xf2 ♙e6!?

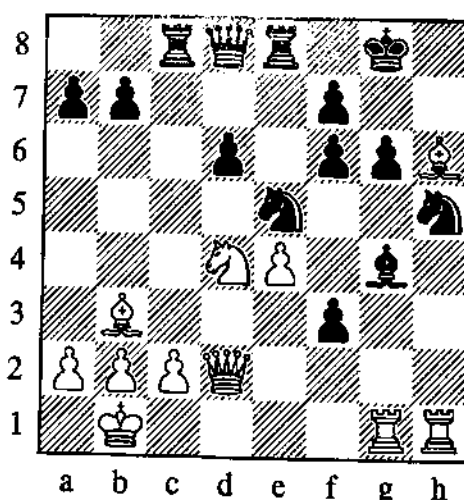
White is better, although the position is still messy.

18. ♜f5! is another interesting move, but I don't feel the need to examine a third option.

### 18...e6

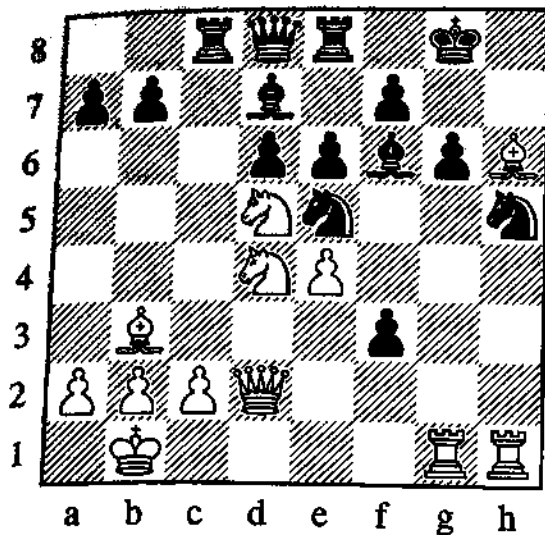
18...♜g4? 19. ♜f5 is winning.

18...♙g4? is also inadequate: 19. ♜xf6† exf6



20. ♜f5! d5 (20...f2 21. ♖xf2+; 20...♙xf5 21. exf5+→) 21. ♙g7!+→





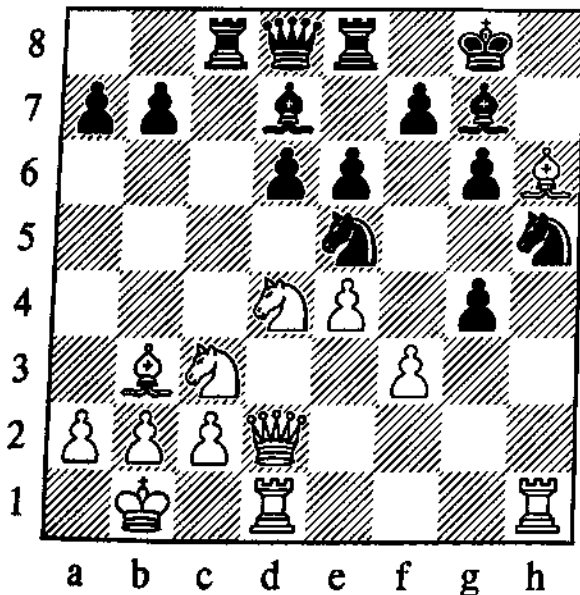
19.♕xf6†

19.♔xh5? exd5 20.♕f5 ♖c4 21.♕xc4 ♔xc4 22.♕g7 ♕xg7 23.♕xg7 ♔exe4 backfires on White.

19...♔xf6 20.♕e3

White has a great initiative for the sacrificed pawns, thanks to the open files and Black's chronically weak dark squares.

D3) 16...e6!?



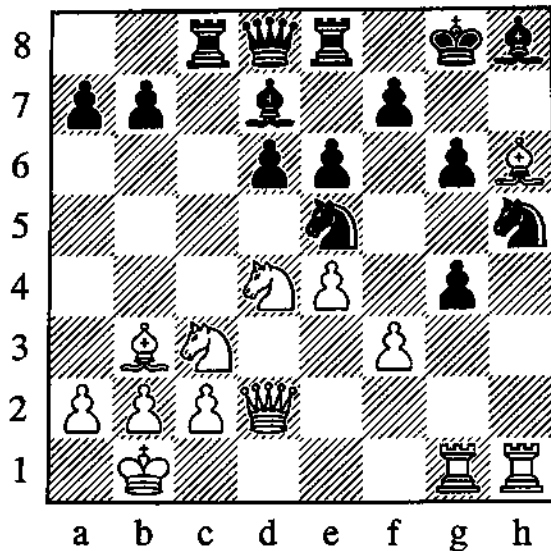
17.♔dg1!

17.♕xg7 ♖xg7 18.♔dg1 ♔h8! leaves White without much of an attack.

The text move leaves Black with a difficult choice between D31) 17...♔h8, D32) 17...g3 and D33) 17...♔f6.

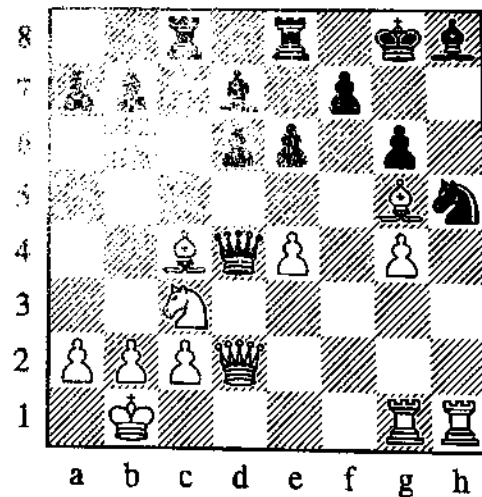
D31) 17...♔h8

This has been the lowest-scoring of Black's three tries.

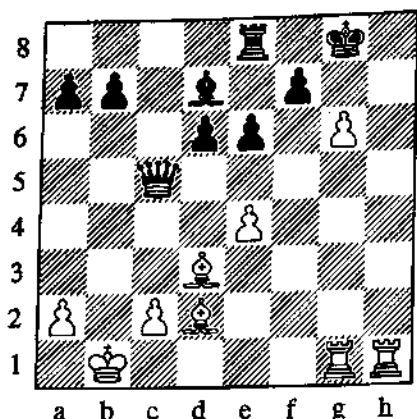


18.♕g5! ♕f6

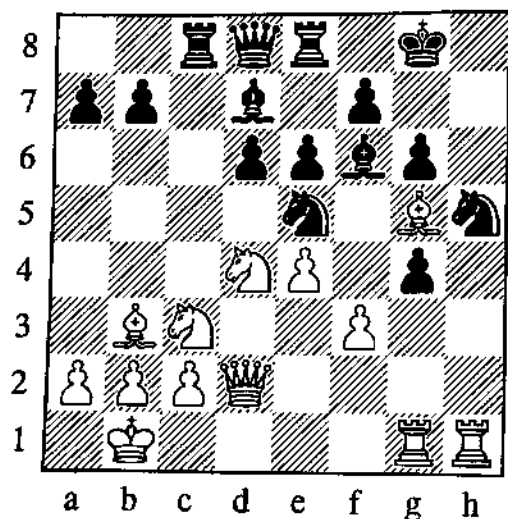
18...♔b6 19.fxg4 ♖c4 (19...♕xg4 20.♔xg4 ♔xd4 21.♔xh5! ♔xd2 22.♕xd2+ 20.♕xc4 ♔xd4 (20...♕xd4 21.gxh5 was winning for White in Savinov – Krupko, Chernigov 2005))



21.♕d3!N (The most precise, although 21.gxh5 is also strong, and led to a quick victory for White in Lindam – Dahm, email 2008) 21...♔xc3 (21...♔b4 22.gxh5 ♕xc3 23.♔c1+—) 22.bxc3 ♔c5 23.gxh5 ♕xc3 24.hxg6! ♕xd2 25.♕xd2 White has the deadly threat of g6-g7, and capturing the pawn leads to an amazing finish:



25...fxg6 26.♖xg6† ♔f7 27.♖h7† ♔xg6  
28.e5#!



19.♖xf6 ♖xf6 20.fxg4 ♖f4 21.♖g2!

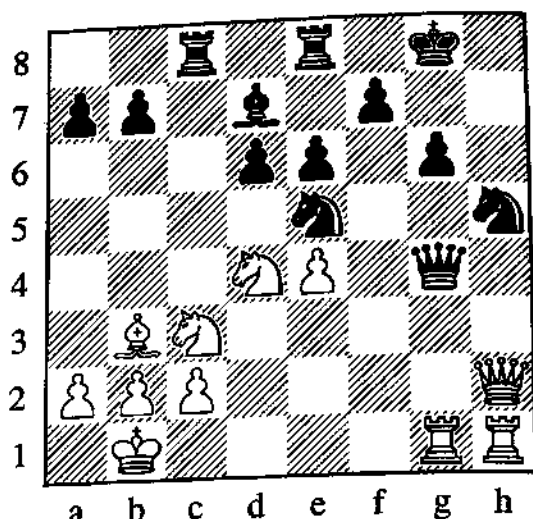
I also found 21.♖e2!N to be excellent for White, but the text move is easier to understand and has scored heavily.

21...♖xg4

After 21...♖f6 22.♖f1 ♖g5 23.♖f3 ♖xf3 24.♖xf3 Black was surprisingly defenceless in Petrobono – Diani, corr. 2013.

22.♖h2!?

22.♖xg4 ♖xg4 23.♖xg4 should also win in the long run, but the text move forces another piece exchange, which should simplify the technical conversion of White's material advantage.



22...♖f3 23.♖xf3 ♖xf3 25.♖xh5N

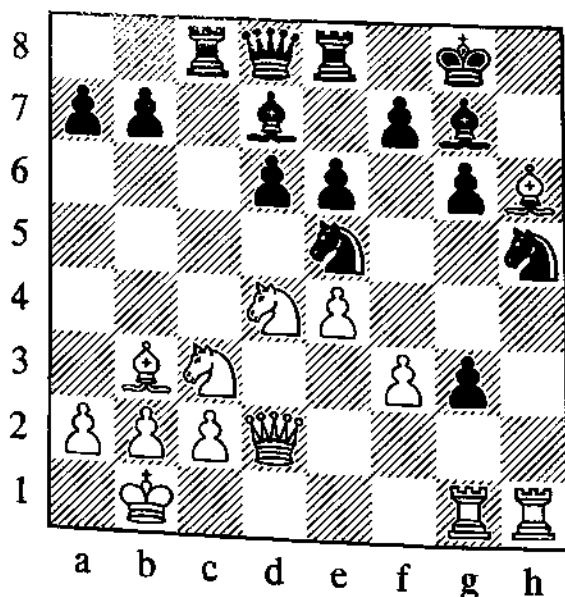
24.♖xd6!? was also winning in Chukanov – Grabarchuk, corr. 2012. Taking on d6 may well be objectively the fastest route to victory, but it depends on some tactical points which are not so obvious when playing without engine assistance. The text move is much easier to understand.

25...♖xh5 26.♖xh5+–

With an extra piece for two pawns, the win is a matter of time and technique.

D32) 17...g3

Black blocks the kingside, but only temporarily.



18.♖ce2!

18. ♖xh5 gxh5 19. ♖xg3 ♖g6 20. ♖f5 is a little too flashy, and after 20... ♖f6 (20... ♖xc3? 21. bxc3+–) 21. ♖xd6 ♖c6 the position is not at all clear. Even though MVL beat Kasimdzhanov from here in 2009, it was a messy affair, and in the subsequent game Pasko – Moura, corr. 2010, Black eventually prevailed.

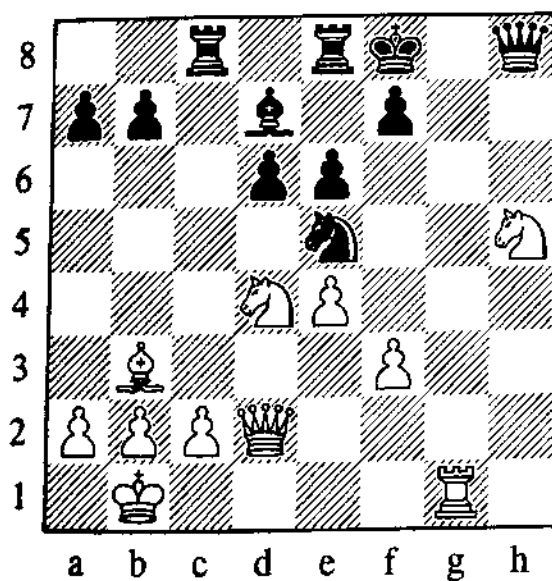
18... ♖f6 19. ♖xg7 ♖xg7

19... ♖xg7 20. ♖xg3 ♖xg3 (20... ♖f6 is well met by 21. f4 ♖eg4 22. ♖f3 [22. ♖h4 is also promising] 22... ♖c6 23. ♖g5, as given by Pavlovic) 21. ♖xg3 a5 22. a3 is unpleasant for Black, who has scored 0/6 from this position in correspondence and engine games.

20. ♖xh5!

The delayed exchange sac works well, although the simple 20. ♖xg3N is promising too.

20... gxh5 21. ♖xg3 ♖f8 22. ♖xh5 ♖h8



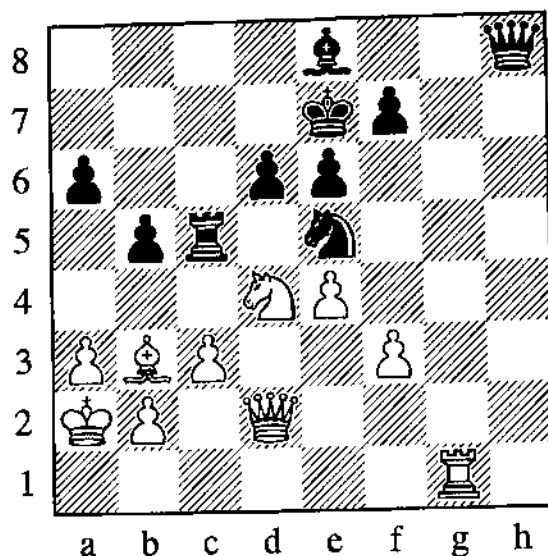
23. ♖g5 ♖c5 24. ♖f6 ♖e7 25. ♖g8+ ♖f8 26. ♖f4 a6 27. a3

The knight on g8 paralyzes Black's pieces, and White can take his time improving his position. We will follow a correspondence game that Black failed to hold.

27... ♖c7 28. c3 ♖c5 29. ♖a2 b5 30. ♖f6 ♖e7

31. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 32. ♖d2

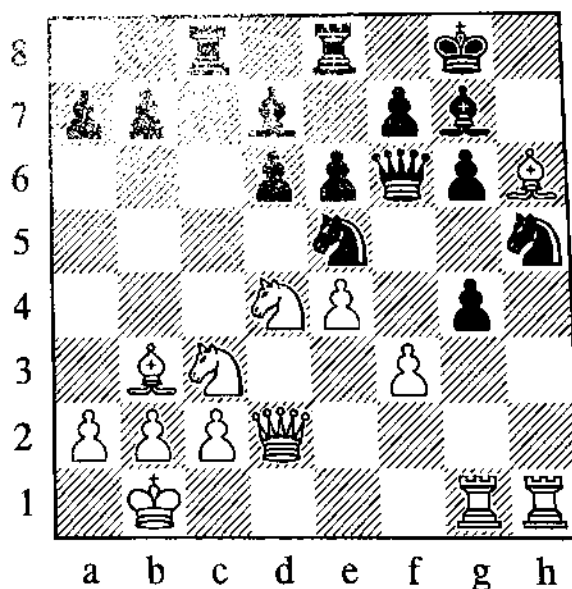
Black's position remains uncomfortable. There are so many possible ways for him to go wrong and, even with accurate defence, it is not clear if he can save the game.



32... ♖f8 33. f4 ♖c4 34. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 35. f5

White was close to winning in Gnutov – Vecsek, corr. 2014.

D33) 17... ♖f6



18. fxg4

18. ♖g5? loses to 18... ♖xf3!.

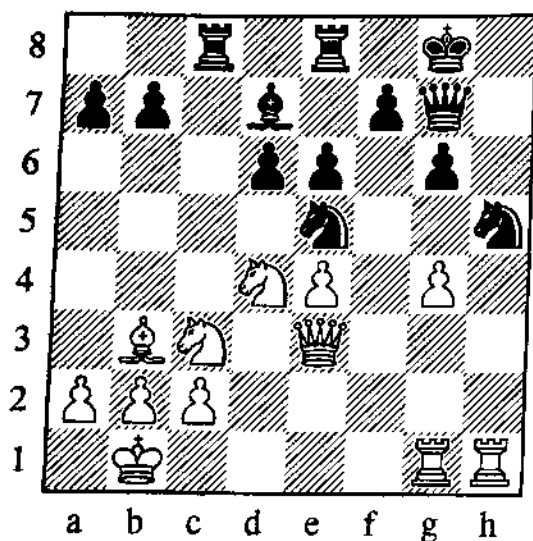
18... ♖xh6

18... ♖c4 is no better: 19. ♖xc4 ♖xd4 20. ♖d3 ♖xh6 21. ♖xh6 ♖g7 22. ♖e3 ♖f6

23.g5 ♖h5 24.♙e2+ 1. Malakhov – Mihalinec, Rijeka 2010.

19.♙xh6 ♗g7 20.♙e3

Of course we aren't going to exchange the queens. For a while it was believed that 20.♙d2 was more accurate, based on an impressive win by Judit Polgar over Kaidanov in 2010. However, based on the attacking ideas I found, I am just as happy to recommend the text move.



20...♙f6 21.g5

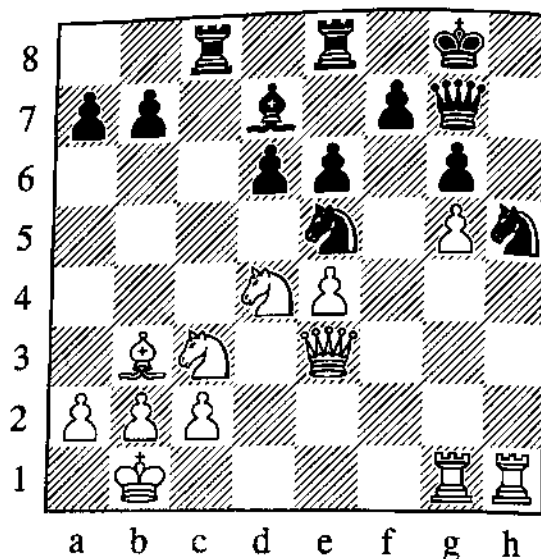
21.♙de2? g5! gives Black a dream position.

21...♙h5

Back in the day, this position was the key to the whole debate as to whether 12...♙e8 or 12...a6 should be preferred. The same sequence of moves could occur after both options, so the question for Black was which of ...♙e8 or ...a6 would be more useful after move 21. On the one hand, ...a6 could prove a waste of time in the event that Black followed up with ...a5, but at the same time it is hard to see why the rook on e8 should be so useful.

After a deep investigation, I eventually discovered a huge difference between the respective positions resulting from 12...a6 and 12...♙e8. The point becomes clear when we consider White's attacking plan. In order to

make progress, White must manoeuvre one of his knights to g3 to remove the blockader on h5. If Black exchanges on g3, White recaptures with the rook and prepares to double on the h-file. The final element of White's plan involves ♙f4-f6 followed by mate on h8 – and yes, it's as simple as that! Since we now know that the f6-square is a vital element in White's plan, we can see why the rook is misplaced on e8. If it were still on f8, a timely ...f6! could spoil all of our good work.



22.♙de2!

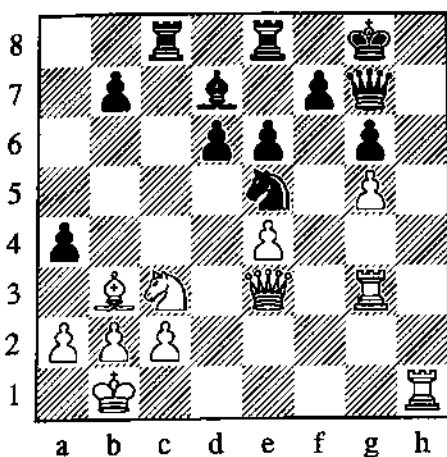
Milos Pavlovic covered this line in his *Cutting Edge* book in 2010. The Serbian grandmaster mainly focused on the Polgar – Kaidanov game involving 20.♙f6, but he also mentioned the text move (which was a novelty at the time) in the notes. However, he only gave a brief sample variation and did not get as far as pointing out the plan of delivering mate on h8.

In an effort to punish Black for omitting ...a6, Dominguez even went for 22.♙db5!?, but it seems to me that this move is playing in the wrong direction. 22...♙xb5 23.♙xb5 ♙e8 24.♙xa7 ♙f3 25.♙g2 ♙e5 (25...♙c5 26.♙xb7 ♙e5 27.a4+) 26.♙e3 ♙e1 27.♙xe1 ♙xb5 28.c3 ♙e5 Despite the computer's evaluation, Black was actually quite solid in Dominguez Perez – Smerdon, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

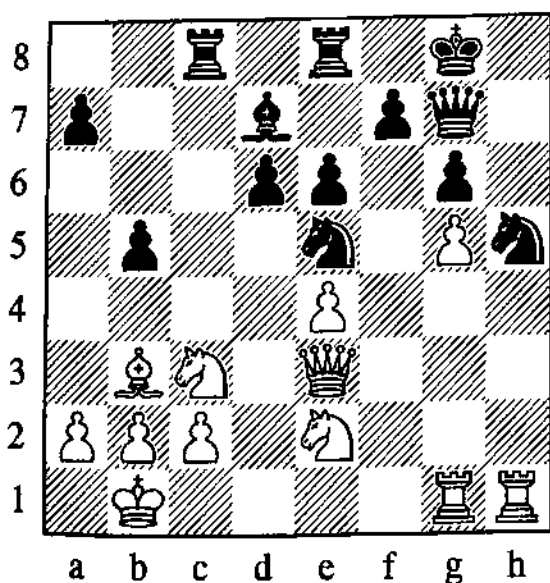
I also considered 22.♖d1N but found that 22...a6!? (22...♖c5 23.♙de2; 22...a5 23.♙db5) 23.♙de2 b5 24.♖xd6 b4♗ gives Black decent chances.

### 22...b5

22...a5 is met in much the same way: 23.♙g3! ♙xg3 (23...♖xc3 24.bxc3) 24.♖xg3 a4



25.♖gh3!! axb3 26.♗f4 This line vividly demonstrates why Black's rook would be better placed on f8. 26...bxc2† (26...♖xc3 27.bxc3 bxc2† 28.♙xc2+; 26...f5 27.gxf6+—) 27.♙xc2 ♖a4† 28.♙b1 There is nothing much that Black can do against the threatened mate.



### 23.♙g3!N

23.♖xh5 gxh5 24.♙f4 ♗h8!? is less convincing.

23.♙f4! has brought the correspondence player Copar two victories, and will almost certainly lead to the same position after a subsequent capture on h5; indeed, you can find both games referenced below. Somehow I find it more natural to move the knight to g3 though, which is why I have given it as the main line.

### 23...a5

After 23...b4 24.♙xh5 gxh5 25.♙e2 the knight is heading for h5 and f6, with a winning attack.

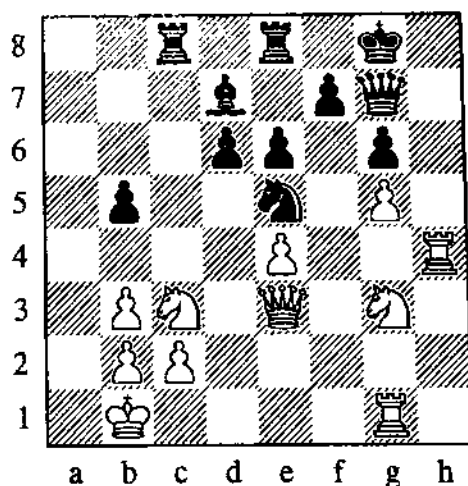
23...♙xg3 is the critical line according to the computer, but only until it spots our mating net: 24.♖xg3 b4 (24...a5 25.♖gh3 a4 26.♗f4! is similar) 25.♖gh3! bxc3 26.♗f4!+— Yet again, Black has no defence against our simple mating plan.

### 24.♖xh5! gxh5

We should also consider:

24...a4N 25.♖b4 c3 26.axb3!

It's interesting to note that the primitive 26.♖gh3! does not work here, as Black's counterattack can be met quickly: 26...bxc2† 27.♙xc2 b4 28.♖f4 ♖a4†! 29.♙b1 bxc3+—



### 26...b4

26...♖a8 27.♖gh1 ♖a6 28.♗f4 ♖ea8 29.♙a4! leaves Black defenceless.

27.♖gh1!

Now it works!

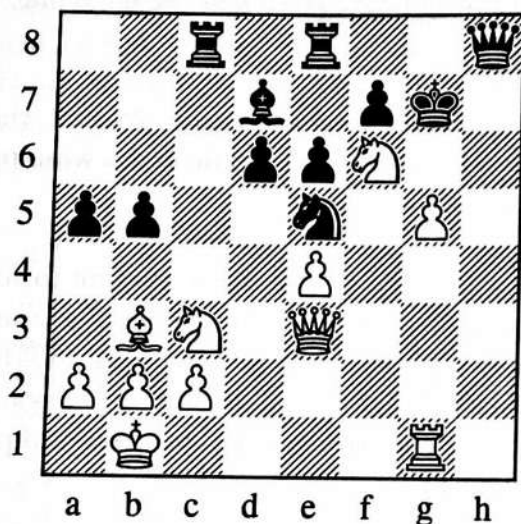
27...f5

27...bxc3 28.♖f4+-

28.exf5 exf5 29.♕d5

White wins.

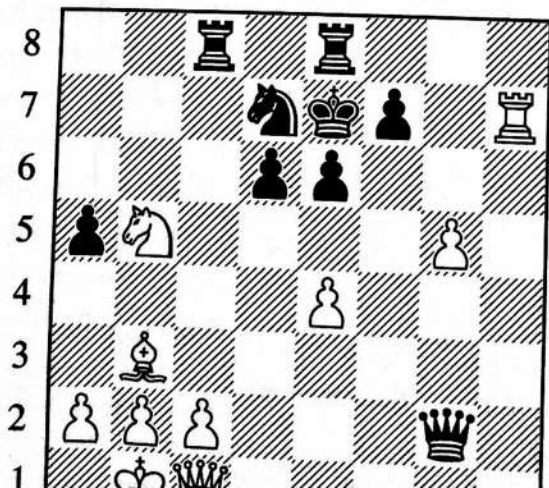
25.♕xh5 ♖h8 26.♕f6† ♔g7

27.♖c1! ♖h2 28.♗h1 ♖g2 29.♗h7† ♔f8  
30.♕xd7† ♕xd7 31.♕xb5

Black has avoided being mated, but White has huge compensation for the tiny material deficit. Copar reached this position in two correspondence games.

31...♔e7

In the first game Black soon found himself in a lost position: 31...♕c5 32.♕xd6 ♕xe4 33.♕xc8 ♔g8 34.g6 ♕d2† 35.♔a1 ♗xc8 36.♗h1!+- Copar – Hagstrom, corr. 2011.

32.♖d1 ♖xg5 33.♕xd6 ♕e5 34.♕xc8†  
♗xc8 35.♖d4 ♗d8 36.♖c5† ♔f6 37.♗h1  
♖g2 38.♗c1 ♖e2 39.a3±

Despite Black's stubborn resistance, White soon converted his extra pawn in Copar – Kangur, corr. 2012.

## Conclusion

The lines examined in this chapter are somewhat out of fashion from Black's point of view, but that does not mean they should be forgotten, and each of them demands accuracy from us.

12...b5 is a dubious pawn sacrifice, but White must remember to retreat his knight to a3 rather than the more obvious d4-square.

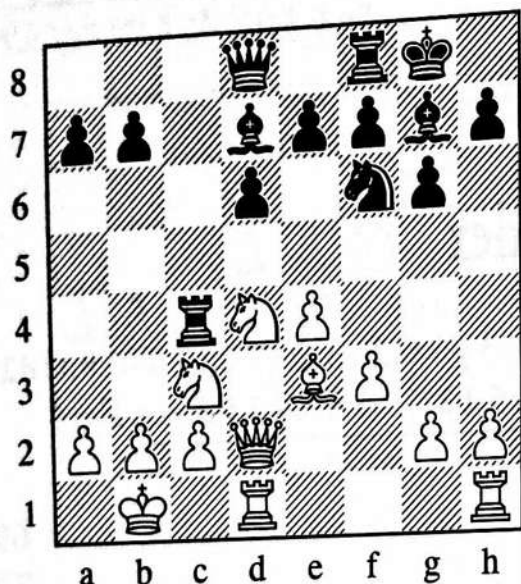
12...a5 is positionally questionable, but the note to move 17 shows that Black has some amazing resources in the event that White makes the slightest slip-up.

12...a6 is a waiting move, albeit not the most useful for Black. However, it was used by some of the top players in the world when they were still trying to figure things out, so you should study it carefully to see where the problems lie.

Finally we dealt with 12...♗e8, when 13.h4 h5 14.g4 hxg4 15.h5 ♕xh5 16.♗h6 reaches a hugely complicated position. I am satisfied that my analysis poses serious problems for the defence, but White needs to know his stuff and remain alert at all times.



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♖d2 ♗c6  
 9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♖c8 11.♙b3 ♗e5  
 12.♙b1 ♗c4 13.♙xc4 ♖xc4



This is the main line. Black forces the exchange of our light-squared bishop and prepares to either pile up on the c-file or hurl his queenside pawns down the board.

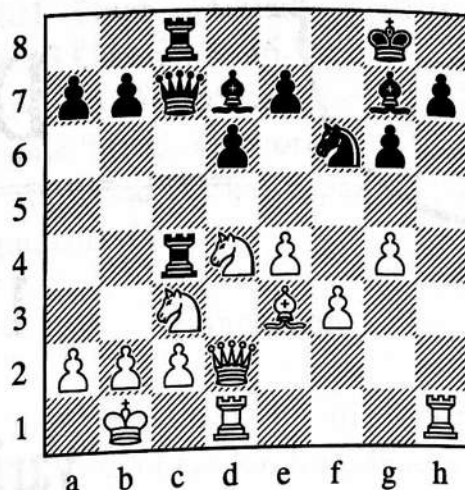
#### 14.g4

Avoiding 14.h4?! h5 when it is hard to progress White's attack.

We will analyse A) 14...♖c7 followed by the more critical B) 14...b5.

14...a6? has been the second most popular choice but I find it a ridiculous move, as after 15.h4 Black is essentially a tempo down on variation B.

14...♙e8 15.h4 ♖c7 (15...h5 has been more popular but this move almost always leads to a dubious position for Black after an exchange on h5.) 16.h5 ♙c8 17.hxg6 fxg6 Even though Black went on to win in Bitoon – Ghaem Maghami, Manila 2013, it seems to me that his play is too slow. Out of many promising continuations, my favourite is:



18.e5! N dxe5 (18...♖xd4!? is a better try but 19.♖xd4 dxe5 20.♖xa7 should still win with careful play) 19.♗db5! ♙xb5 20.♗xb5 ♖b8 21.g5 White is winning.

14...♖a5 gives White a few good options, the simplest being 15.g5 (There is also 15.♗b3 intending e4-e5, but there is little point in learning another set of lines) 15...♗h5 16.♗d5 ♖d8 transposing to variation A below.

#### 14...♖b8

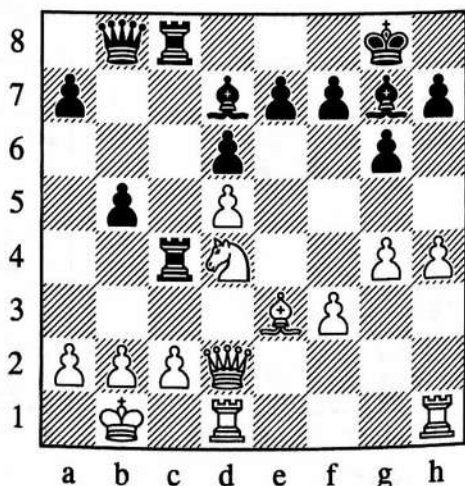
This strikes me as too slow.

#### 15.h4 ♖fc8 16.♗d5!

It seems simplest to avoid the sacrifice on c3, even though White can probably still claim an advantage if he allows it.

#### 16...♗xd5 17.exd5 b5

17...♙c5 18.h5 ♙xd5 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♖h2 h6 (20...h5 21.gxh5 ♙xh5 22.♖g3→) 21.♙xh6! ♙xd4 22.♙de1 The attack decides.





18.h5 g5N

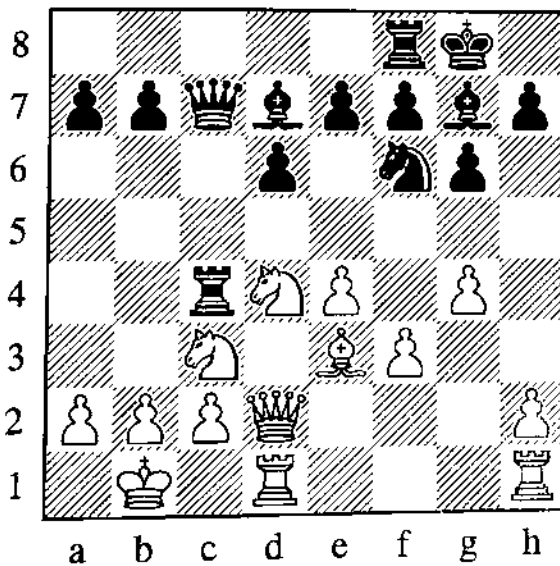
18...♟b7 19.hxg6 f6g6 occurred, via a slightly different move order, in Al Sayed – Somev, Dubai 2001, when the piece sacrifice 20.♟h2 h6 21.♟xh6! enabled White to break through on the kingside.

19.h6 ♟e5

Black is staying in the game, but his position remains suspicious. A sample continuation is:

20.b3 ♟c3 21.♟xg5 f6 22.f4 ♟xd4 23.♟xd4 ♟c7 24.♟xf6 exf6 25.♟xf6 ♟e8 26.♟de1 ♟xc2 27.♟xe8† ♟xe8 28.♟g5† ♟h8 29.♟g7† ♟xg7 30.hxg7† ♟xg7 31.♟xc2±

A) 14...♟c7



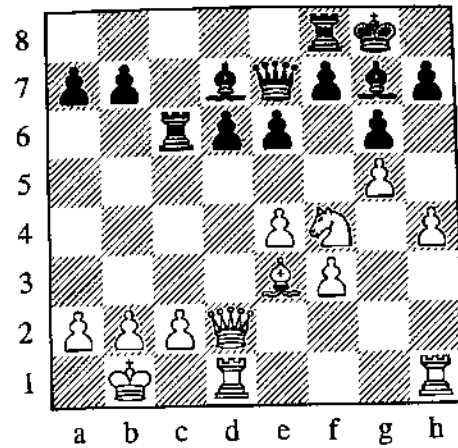
White has more than one route to a great position, so nobody really plays this anymore.

15.g5

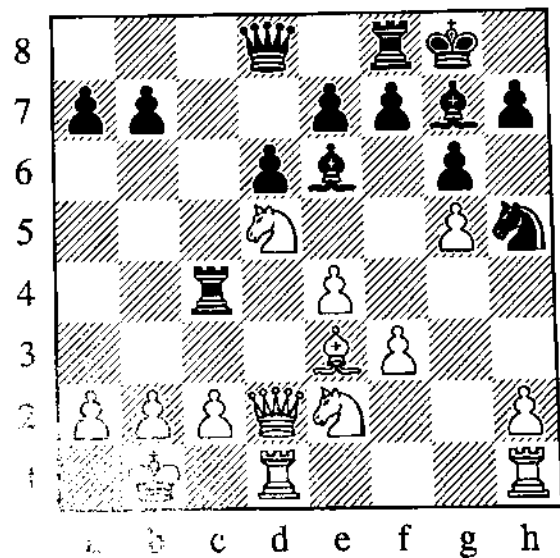
The blunt 15.h4 ♟c8 16.h5 allows 16...♟xc3 17.bxc3 ♟xc3 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♟h6 ♟xd2 20.♟xd2 ♟xh6 21.♟xh6 ♟g7 22.♟h1 ♟h7 with reasonable compensation for Black, Wang Hao – Xu Jun, Jinan 2005.

15...♟h5 16.♟d5 ♟d8 17.♟e2 ♟e6

17...e6 18.♟df4 (18.♟dc3!? ♟c6 19.♟b5 is another decent option) 18...♟xf4 19.♟xf4 ♟c6 20.h4 ♟e7



21.♟d4!? (The simple 21.h5N is also promising) 21...f6 22.h5! f6g5 23.hxg6 h6 24.♟xg7 ♟xg7 25.♟h5 ♟xg6 26.f4↑ Felgaer – Rodriguez Vila, Asuncion 2003.



18.♟xg7!

The simplest route to a clear advantage. Black can play for tricks, but objectively he does not have adequate compensation for the pawn.

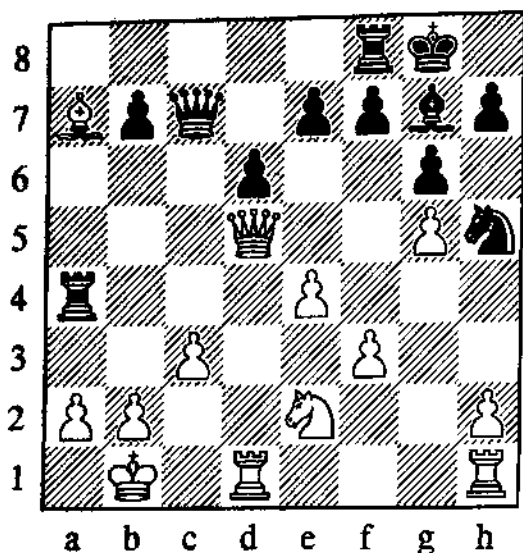
18...♟xd5

Giving up a second pawn does not help: 18...b6 19.♟xb6 ♟a8 20.b3 ♟xd5 21.exd5 ♟h4 22.c3 ♟b8 23.♟e3 ♟a4 24.♟c2 ♟a3 25.♟c1 f6 26.♟he1± Ehlvest – Tiviakov, Isle of Man 1998.

19.♟xd5 ♟c7 20.c3 ♟a4

20...♟c8 21.♟e3 maintained White's advantage in Moreno Carnero – Mullor

Gomez, Lanzarote 2003 (but note that 21.♔d4?! ♕xd4 22.cxd4 b5 23.♖c1 ♖b6 24.e5 dxe5 25.♖xe5 ♖g7 26.♙c3 ♙f5 27.♙xb5 ♖c6 28.♙c3 ♖xf3 was not so clear in Bologan – Chatalbashev, Bourbon Lancy 1998).



### 21.♔e3

Back when I was rated under 2200 I erred with 21.♔d4? ♖a5 22.♖b3 ♖xg5 in Negi – Hakki, Dubai 2004.

### 21...♖fa8 22.a3 ♖4a5 23.♖d3

23.♖b3 ♖d7 24.h4 ♖b5 25.♖a2 ♖c7 26.♔d5 ♖c6 27.♖hd1± was also pretty convincing in Sax – Velickovic, Bled 2005.

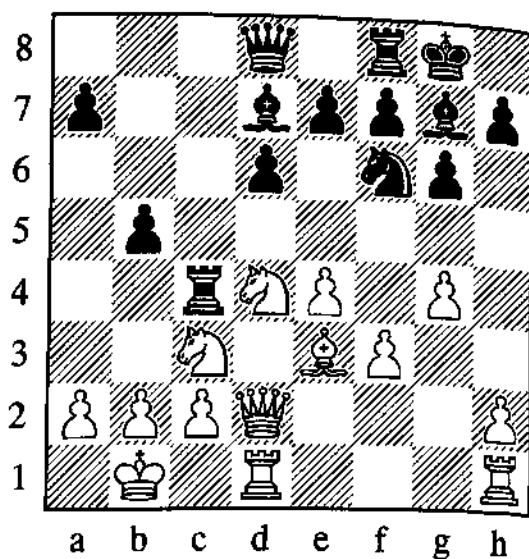
### 23...♖d7 24.h4 ♖a4

We are well past the point of normal opening preparation. The game goes on, but Black will struggle to demonstrate compensation. I will show a few more moves of a high-level game for illustrative purposes.

25.♙d4 d5 26.♖he1 ♔e5 27.♙c2 dxe4 28.♖xe4 ♖xe4 29.fxe4 ♔g3 30.♖h1 ♖e5 31.♔d4 f5 32.gxf6 ♙xf6 33.♖h3 ♙xe4 34.♖xg3 ♙xg3 35.♔f4 ♙e2 36.♔xe5 ♙xd4 37.♙xd4±

To his credit, Black managed to salvage a draw in Karjakin – Le Quang, Dresden 2008, but I doubt he was in a hurry to repeat this opening variation.

### B) 14...b5



This is the most testing reply. In this key position I would like to depart from the trendy theoretical path.

### 15.h4!

Completely ignoring Black's play.

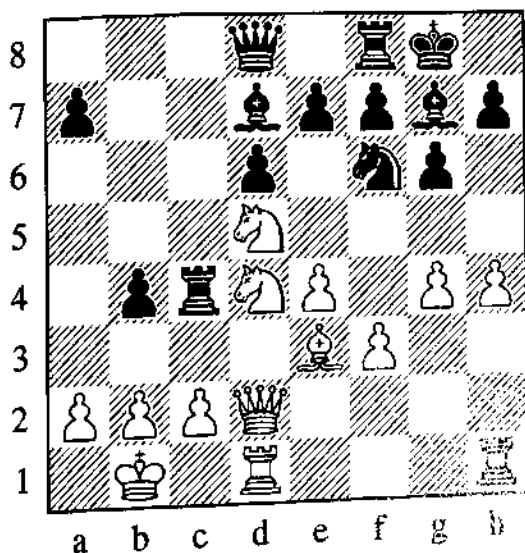
15.b3 is often given an exclamation mark, but 15...b4 sees Black sacrifice an exchange for interesting compensation. It is hard to say if Black's scheme is objectively sound, but it seems to me that Black's position is relatively easy to handle, while White must choose between a great many options in an effort to hold on to a rather unstable advantage. In short, this line has enormous practical value for Black, whereas White's position does not feel at all in the spirit of the Yugoslav Attack.

### 15...b4

15...h5 has scored reasonably for Black but, as a general rule, I am not at all worried by this move in positions where we already have a pawn on g4, as the open g-file will offer White a lot of attacking potential. One example continued 16.gxh5 ♙xh5 17.♙ce2 ♖c7 18.♔h6 ♖c8 19.♔xg7 ♙xg7 20.♖c1 a5 21.♖hg1 e6 22.f4± Pogonina – Sudakova, Elista 2002.

After the text move White may try **B1) 16.♖d5** or **B2) 16.♖ce2!**. My analysis indicates that both moves should lead to endgames with slightly better chances for White. The first option has the practical advantage of not requiring you to remember anywhere near as many forcing lines. The latter option is more complex and challenging, but it puts a lot more pressure in Black, who must be extremely accurate just to reach an endgame where White still has some winning chances.

### B1) 16.♖d5



Recently this has done excellently for White, and the prospect of a slightly better endgame without risk will appeal to many players. Let's see how the endgame is reached.

### 16...♖xd5

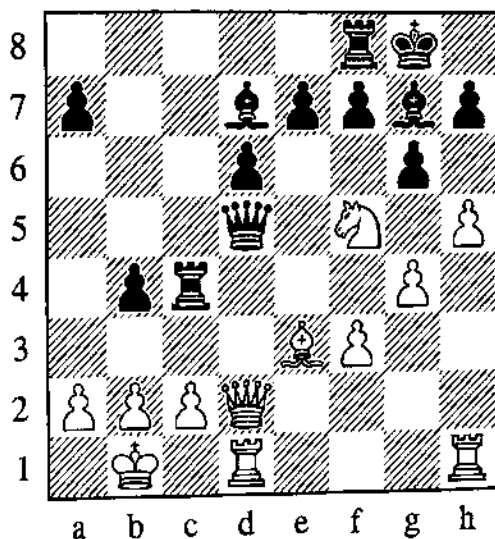
16...e6 17.♖xf6† ♖xf6 18.♖h2!? was promising for White in Paramos Dominguez – Martin Gonzalez, Spain 1990.

### 17.exd5 ♖a8

17...♖a5 only gives White the additional option of 18.♖b3!? (18.h5 ♖xd5 transposes to the main line) 18...♖c7 19.♖d4± as in Simek – Jedlicka, Czech Republic 2010.

### 18.h5 ♖xd5 19.♖f5!

19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♖h2 can be met by 20...h5! 21.gxh5 (21.♖f5 ♖e5∞) 21...♖e5!N forcing a queen exchange, after which Black's strong bishops promise him adequate play for the sacrificed pawn.



### 19...♖xd2 20.♖xe7† ♖h8 21.♖xd2

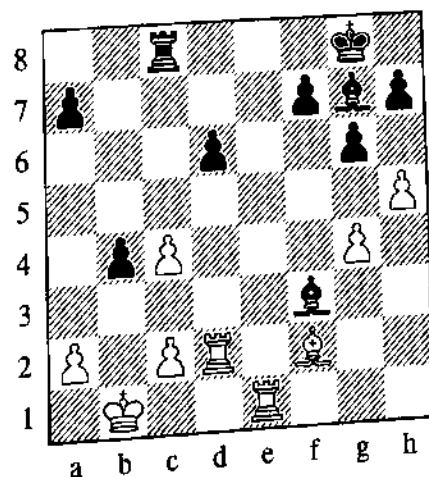
White may also try for an edge with 21.♖xd2!N, but I think Black should be okay with his two bishops.

### 21...♖e8 22.♖d5 ♖c6!

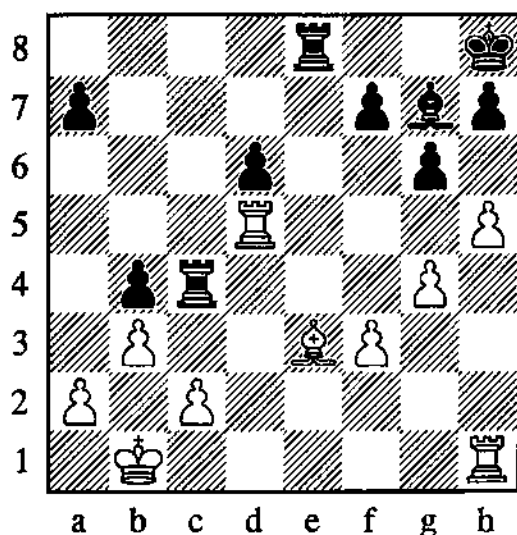
22...♖g8 23.♖f4 favours White.

### 23.b3 ♖xd5 24.♖xd5

24.bxc4!? ♖xf3 25.♖e1 ♖g8 26.♖f2 ♖c8!N (26...♖xe1† 27.♖xe1 ♖c3 28.♖d3 ♖xe1 29.♖xf3+– Berg – Christenson, Norway 2014) reaches an endgame which is hard to assess. The critical position seems to arrive after:



27.hxg6 hxg6 28.♖xd6 ♕xg4 29.♕xa7 ♖xc4  
30.♖d8† ♔h7 31.♕d4!? (31.♖h1† ♕h5?) The  
machine indicates that White is slightly ahead,  
but his task is not easy. Especially in a practical  
game, the two connected passed pawns could  
be troublesome.

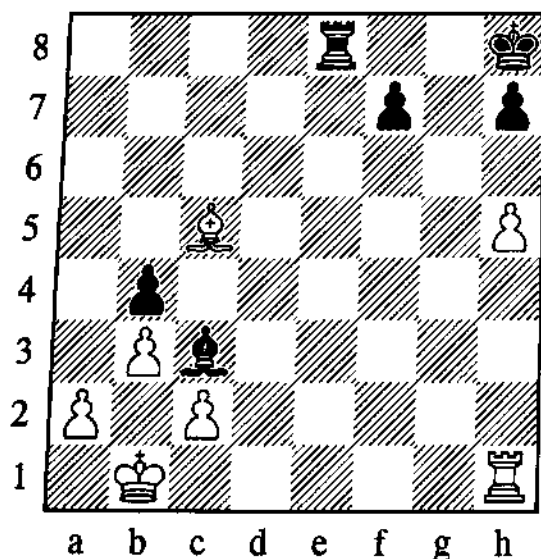


24...♖c3 25.♕xa7 ♖xf3 26.♖xd6 gxf5  
27.gxf5 ♖h3 28.♖dd1 ♖xh1 29.♖xh1 ♕c3

Only White can be better, but can he make  
his extra pawn count?

30.♕c5

30.♖f1 ♔g7 makes things easier for Black.



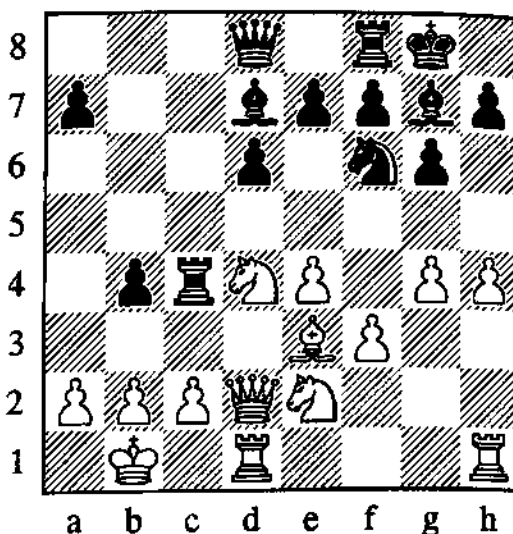
30...♖e5 31.♕d6 ♖d5 32.♕e7 ♖d7 33.♕f8  
♔g8

33...♖d8 allows 34.♕h6 intending ♕c1-b2.

34.♕h6 f5

White can keep playing, but my guess is that  
Black can hold.

B2) 16.♕ce2!



This feels more provocative, but I think  
the potential rewards make this move worth  
the additional effort and risk. White's plan  
is obvious, and Black needs to arrange  
counterplay before he is squashed on the  
kingside. We will analyse B21) 16...♖a5 and  
B22) 16...♖c7

16.♕c5 is premature; a possible continuation  
is 17.♖d3 ♖c7 18.g5 ♕h5 19.♖xd6† and  
Black has a pawn down for nothing.

16...h5

This just opens up the kingside for White to  
roll through.

17.♕h6!

White can play 17.gxf5, just like the earlier  
note with 15...h5, but I like the text move  
even more.

17...hxg4N

17...e5? 18.♕f5! ♕xf5 19.gxf5 was already  
winning in Alonso – Calizaya, Callao 2007.

18.h5 e5

18...gxf3 19.♕xg7 ♔xg7 20.hxg6 ♖h8  
21.♕xf3 fxf6 22.e5 ♕e4 23.♖d3 ♖xh1  
24.♖xh1 ♖c7 25.♖g1†

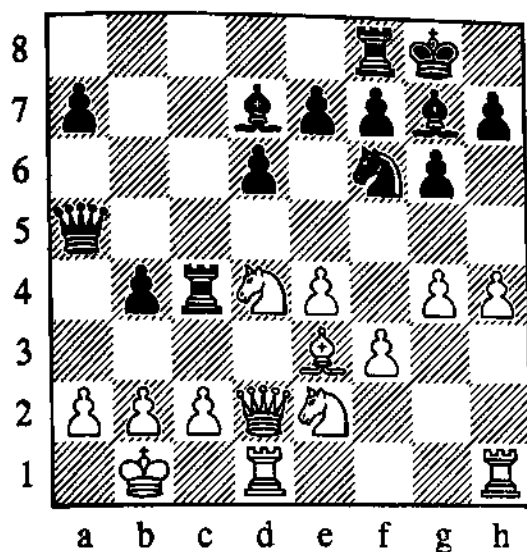
19.hxg6! f×g6 20.♙xg7 ♜xg7 21.♚h6† ♜f7  
22.f×g4 ♙xg4

22...exd4? 23.♞df1 ♙xg4 24.♚g5 ♜g7  
25.♟f4+—

23.♞df1 ♙h5 24.♞xh5 g×h5 25.♟f3

White has a dangerous attack for the sacrificed material.

### B21) 16...♚a5



### 17.♙h6!

This move is most effective before Black's rook has moved from f8.

17.h5 ♞fc8 18.♙h6 (or 18.hxg6 ♞xg6 19.♙h6 ♙h8) 18...♙h8 (18...♙xh6 19.♞xh6 ♞f8) 19.hxg6 f×g6 is rather double-edged.

### 17...♞fc8N

This seems like the most obvious move to me.

17...♙h8 18.♙xh8 ♜xh8 is a dubious exchange sacrifice, and after 19.h5 White still has some attacking chances in addition to his extra material.

A few games have continued:

17...♙xh6 18.♞xh6 ♞fc8

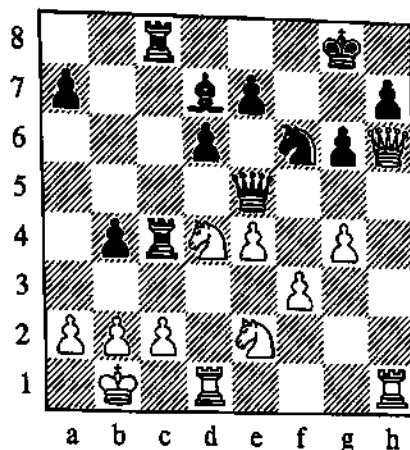
18...♚e5 19.h5 ♞fc8 transposes.

19.h5 ♚e5?!

19...g5 20.♟f5 (20.♟g3? ♞xd4! 21.♞xd4 ♙e6!— would completely turn the tables) 20...♙xf5 21.♞xg5† ♜f8 transposes to the main line below.

20.hxg6 f×g6

In Costa Fernandes – Braga, Nova Friburgo 1980, White could have best exploited his advantage with:



### 21.♞d2!N

Combining attack and defence.

### 21...a5

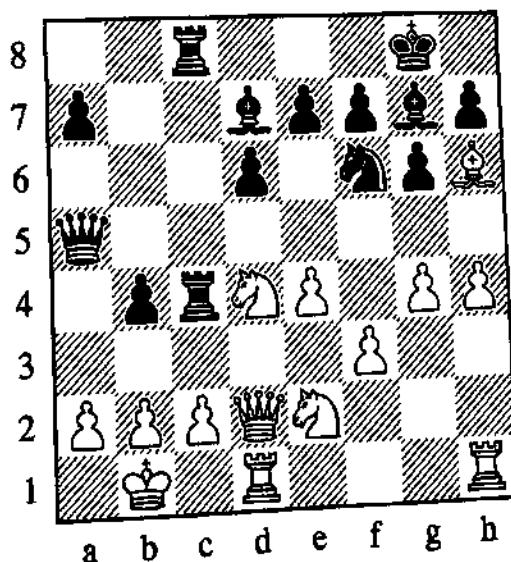
I have chosen this reply to illustrate the subtle point of White's last move. Other moves are possible, but it is obvious that Black is struggling.

### 22.♟f4! ♜f7

22...♞xd4 23.♟xg6 wins, as Black cannot take the rook with check.

### 23.♟de2+—

The main threats are g4-g5 and ♟d3, and Black has no defence.



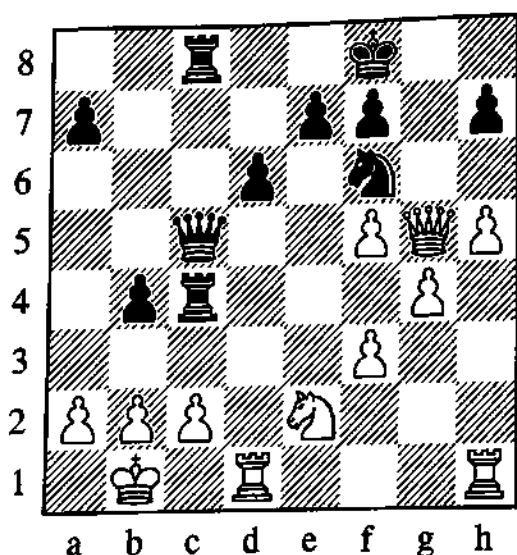
18. ♖xg7 ♕xg7 19. h5

19. ♖g3 is an interesting alternative, but I see no reason to avoid the direct approach.

19... g5 20. ♖f5† ♕xf5 21. ♖xg5† ♕f8 22. exf5 ♖c5

22... ♖xc2 is well met by 23. ♖d4! when the knight controls everything. 23... ♖g2 24. ♖h6†!? White nudges the king to e8, where it will be slightly more vulnerable. 24... ♕e8 25. ♖d2 ♖xd2 26. ♖xd2 ♖c4 27. b3 ♖c8 28. ♖c1 ♖xc1† 29. ♖xc1 Black faces a difficult endgame.

The text move briefly transposes to Jovanovic – Gonzaga Grego, Internet 2012. I found a most surprising way to secure White's advantage.



23. ♖d2! N

23. ♖he1 ♖f2! creates a mess. The previous note revealed that the loss of the c2-pawn is not such a big problem for White, so we can even lose a tempo to provoke Black into taking it.

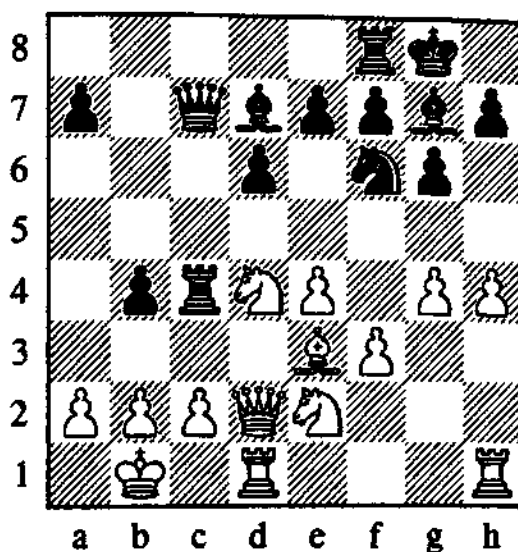
23... ♖xc2 24. ♖h6† ♕e8 25. ♖d4 ♖c4 25... ♖g2 26. ♖he1±

26. ♖d2

White is in control, for instance:

26... a5 27. ♖b3 ♖b6 28. g5 a4 29. gxf6 axb3 30. ♖he1 ♖4c7 31. ♖g5±

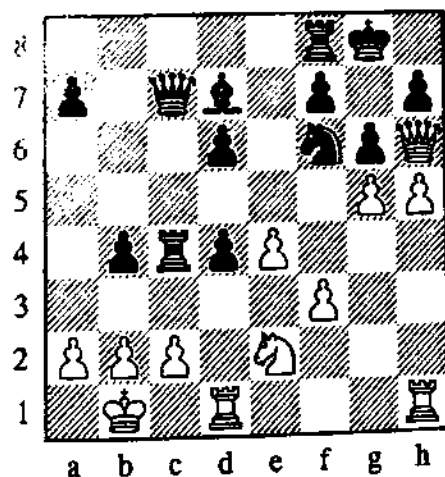
B22) 16... ♖c7



A typical idea, planning ... ♖fc8 with the threat of ... e5.

17. h5!

Amazingly, 17. ♖h6 seems to lead to a brilliant forced draw, which was played as far back as 1989! 17... ♖xh6 18. ♖xh6 e5! 19. h5 (19. ♖f5? ♖xf5 20. gxf5 ♖xc2 21. h5 ♖xc2→) 19... ♖d4 20. g5



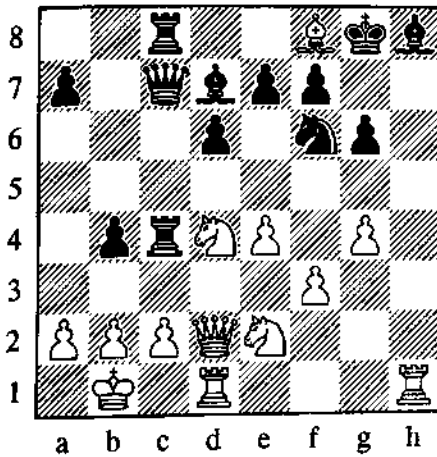
20... ♖g4! (20... ♖xh5? 21. ♖f4!→) 21. fxg4 ♖a4! 22. b3 ♖xc2 23. ♖xd4 ♖xb3! 24. axb3 ♖c3! 25. ♖xc2 ♖xb3† 26. ♕c1 ♖c8 27. ♖h2 ♖a3† 28. ♕b1 ♖b3† 29. ♕c1 ♖a3† 30. ♕b1 ♖b3† ½–½ Hazai – Tolnai, Hungary 1989. A magical draw!

17... ♖c8

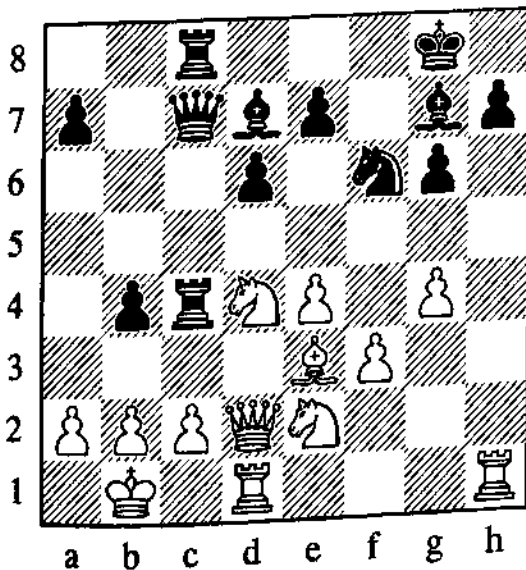
17...e5 18.h6!?!N (18.♖f5!?!N is also dangerous, but not required) 18...♗h8 19.♖f5!?! is a safe version of the thematic knight jump. 19...♗xf5 20.gxf5 ♖c8 21.♗xd6 ♗xc2 22.♗xc7 ♗2xc7 23.♗hg1± Black faces an unpleasant endgame.

### 18.hxg6 fxg6

18...hxg6? 19.♗h6 ♗h8 20.♗f8!+ is one of the Dragon's most iconic sacrifices, which led to a quick win for White in Prandstetter – Dobrovolsky, Frenstat 1982.



Incidentally, my first ever win against a Dragon featured an almost identical sacrifice. The basic idea is 20...♗xf8 21.♗xh8? ♗xh8 22.♗h6+ ♗g8 23.♗h1 ♖h5 24.gxh5 with a mating attack.



19.b3!

Not the usual move, but a strong one. The idea is to get an improved version of the 19.♖f4 line mentioned below.

19.♗h6 ♗h8 20.♗g5!?! e5 21.♖f5 could be analysed in more detail, but I don't want to get too distracted.

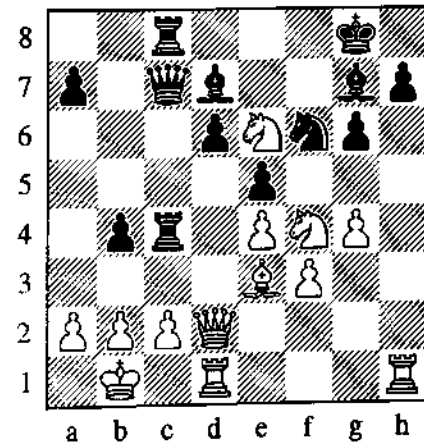
19.♖f4!?

I played this move in 2008 and won rather easily, but there is a lot more happening in this position than I had initially suspected.

19...e5

19...♗a5 20.g5!?! (20.♗h2!?!↑) 20...♗xg5 21.♖fe6 ♗a5 22.♖xg7 ♖xg7 23.♗g5↑ (23.♗dg1±)

20.♖de6



To understand what is happening here, we should check both a) 20...exf4?! and b) 20...♗b7!N.

a) 20...exf4?!

Black gets three pieces for his queen, but this is a particularly poor version of the trade.

21.♖xc7 fxe3 22.♗xe3

Another game continued 22.♗xd6 ♗8xc7

23.e5 ♗4c6 24.♗xb4 ♖e8 25.♗b3+ ♗e6

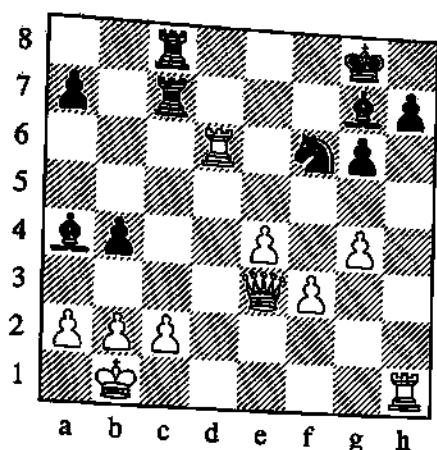
26.♗xe3 ♗xc2 27.♗d8± Aroshidze –

Kanarek, Barcelona 2011.

22...♗4xc7 23.♗xd6 ♗a4



## Dragon

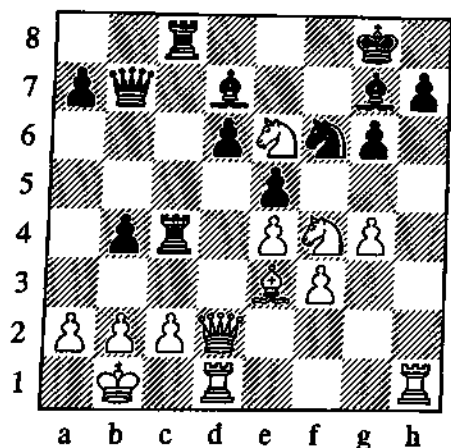


24.b3!N

White has a clear advantage as long as he follows up precisely. (Instead after 24. Bxd2 Bxc2+ 25. Bxc2 Bxc2 26. Bb3+ B8c4! 27. Bxc2 Bxc2 28. Qxc2 Qd7= Black was fine and later went on to win in Boros – Stoczek, Austria 2010.)

b) 20... Bb7!N

This improvement leads to some crazy complications.



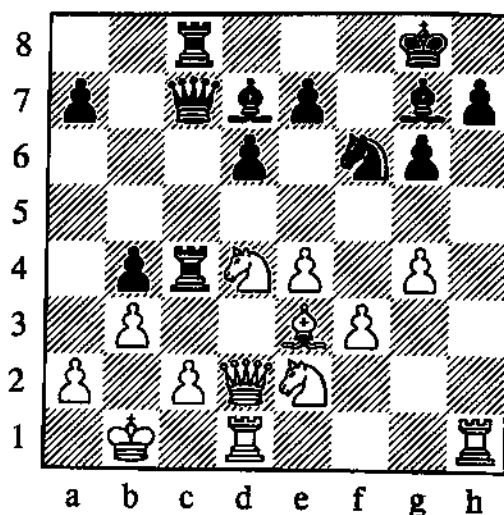
21. Qxg7 exf4 22. Qd4 Qa4!

22... Qxe4 23. fxe4 Qa4 24. b3 Bxc2 25. Bxf4! Qxb3 26. Qe8! An amazing idea. 26... Qxa2+ 27. Qa1 Bxa6 (27... Bxe8 28. Bf6+-) 28. Bxd6! (28. Qf6+ Qf8 29. Qd5+ Qe8 is just equal after the surprising 30. Bf7+! Qxf7 31. Bxh7+=) 28... Bxd6 29. Qxd6 B8c6 30. Bxh7! The final touch. 30... Bxd6 31. Bg7+ Qf8 32. Bxa7 Qf7 33. Qc5!+- 23. Qxf6

23.b3 Bxc2 24. Bxf4 Qxb3! is dangerous.

23... Bxc2+ 24. Qa1 Qxd1 25. Bxd1

The computer calls it equal but in practice anything could happen. This could be interesting to analyse further, but I prefer the main line, to which we now return.



19... Bc5 20. Qf4

20. Bxb4 e5 may not be bad for White after 21. Qf5, but I would prefer to stay on track with the plan already outlined.

20... Bc5

20... Qxg4 does not work: 21. Qfe6 Qxe6 (21... Bxa5 22. Qxc5 dxc5 23. Qf5!+-) 22. Qxe6 Bxc2 23. Qxc7 Bxd2 24. Qxd2 Bxc7 25. Qxb4+

Of course we should also check:

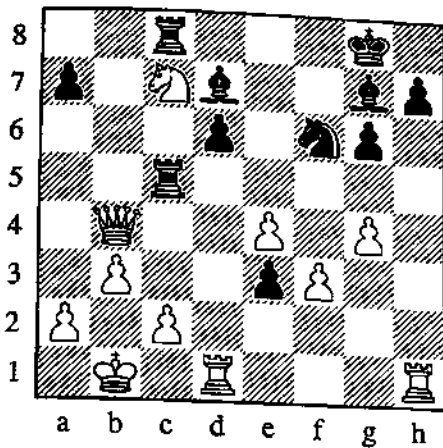
20... e5N 21. Qde6

Compared with the 19. Qf4 line analysed above, here Black cannot move his queen away as the rook is hanging on c5.

21. Qfe6 leads to the same thing after 21... exd4.

21... exf4 22. Qxc7 fxc3 23. Bxb4

White can also consider: 23. Bxe3 B5xc7 24. Bxd6 Bxc2 25. Bxd2 B8c3 26. Be2 Bxd2 27. Bxd2 Bxf3 28. e5 Qc6 29. Bxb4 Qd5 30. Bc5 Qc3+ 31. Qb2 Qd5 The pieces are still jumping around, but after 32. Be1 White keeps the better chances.

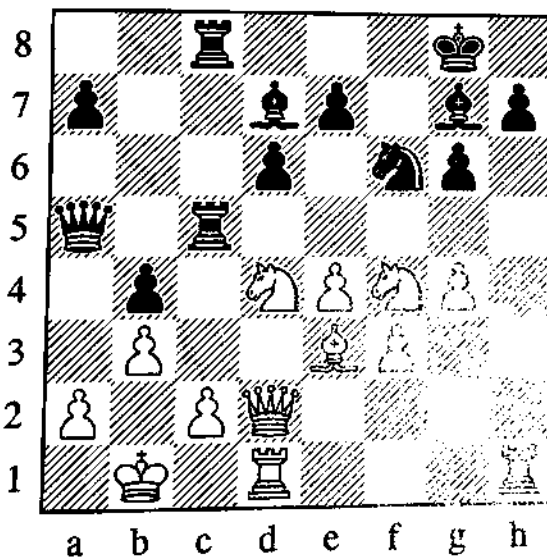


23...a5

23...♞5xc7 24.♞xd6 is similar.

24.♞b6 ♞5xc7 25.♞xd6

White is clearly better, although the position remains complicated.



21.♞h2!N

21.♘d3 ♞c3 22.♞c1!? is a more conservative approach, first defending against ...e5, then planning to switch the queen to the h-file. White's chances may still be preferable, although I wouldn't be overly confident about it due to 22...♞b8!? when White must watch out for the rook transfer to a6. After the further 23.♞e1 ♞cc8 24.♞h4 ♞b6! 25.♙d2 ♞c3! the position was incredibly complex and unclear in Debevec – Heinemann, corr. 2007.

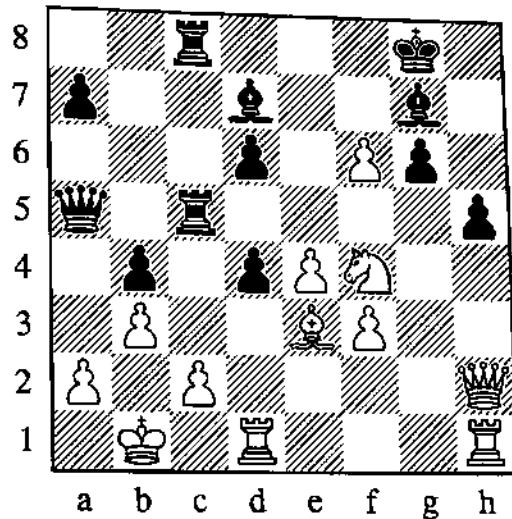
21...e5

21...g5 22.♘d3 ♞c3 23.♙c1±

22.g5 exd4

22...exf4? 23.gxf6 ♞h5 24.♞xf4 is hopeless for Black.

23.gxf6 h5



24.♘xg6!

24.♙xd4? ♞xc2! would be a disaster.

24...♞xc2!

This is Black's best chance.

24...♙xf6

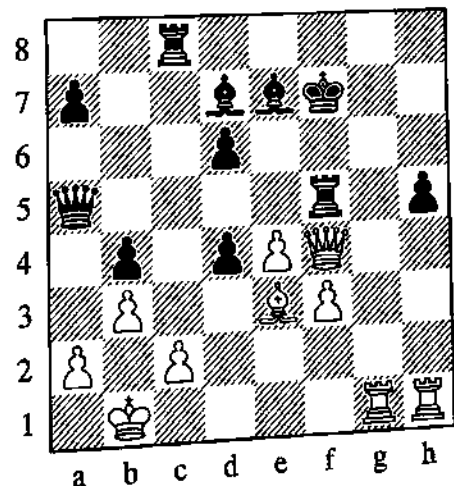
After this move Black can barely survive, and even after perfect defence White still keeps a clear advantage.

25.♘e7† ♙xe7 26.♙dg1† ♙f7

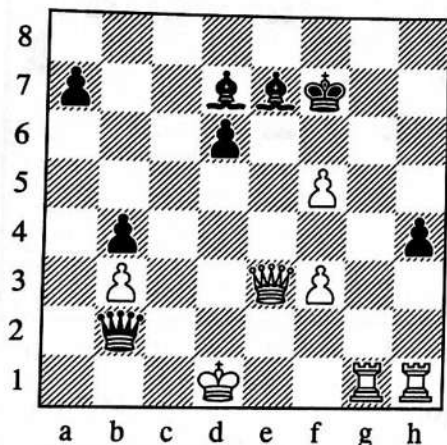
26...♙g5 27.♞xh5+–

27.♞f4† ♞f5!

27...♙f5 28.♙xd4 ♞xc2 29.♞xf5† ♞xf5 30.♙g7† ♙e8 31.exf5 wins.

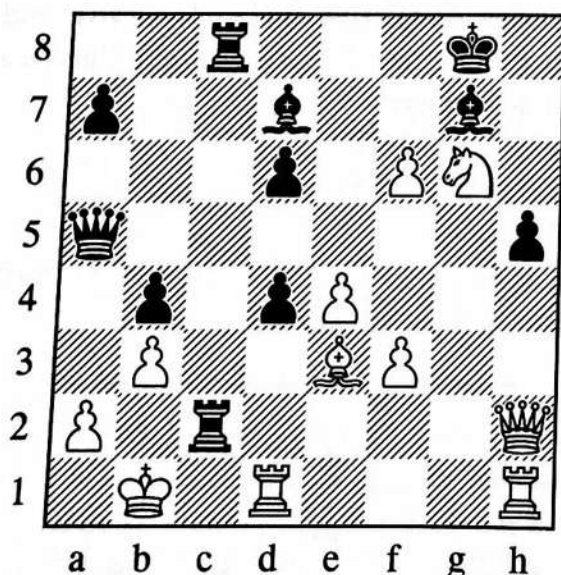


28. exf5 ♖xc2 29. ♔xc2 ♜xa2† 30. ♔c1  
 30. ♔d3?? ♕b5† 31. ♔xd4 ♜b2† 32. ♔d5  
 ♜xb3†+  
 30... ♜a3† 31. ♔d2 dxe3† 32. ♜xe3 ♜b2†  
 33. ♔d1 h4  
 33... ♕f6 34. ♖xh5±  
 33... ♜b1† 34. ♔e2 ♜b2† runs into 35. ♔f1!  
 ♕b5† 36. ♔e1 threatening a deadly check on  
 e6.



34. ♖d3 ♜e5 35. ♜e4 ♕xf5  
 35... ♜c3? 36. ♜d5†+  
 36. ♜xe5 dxe5 37. ♔e2

White has excellent winning chances.

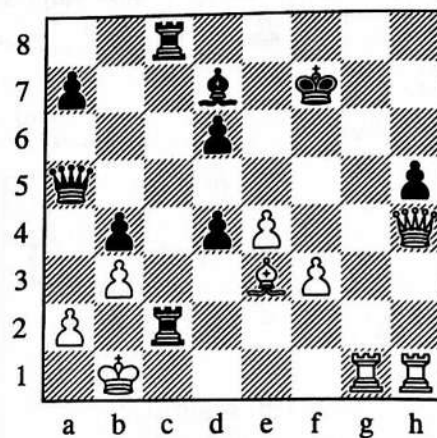


25. ♔e7† ♔f8 26. fxg7† ♔xe7 27. ♜h4† ♔f7  
 28. g8=♕†

Black has to take on g8 anyway, so why not have a bit of fun and promote to a bishop?

28... ♖xg8

28... ♔xg8? 29. ♖dg1† ♔f7



30. a4! bxa3 31. ♕xd4! The bishop beautifully combines attack and defence. 31... a2† 32. ♔a1+—

29. ♜xh5† ♜xh5 30. ♖xh5 ♖gg2 31. ♕c1  
 ♖xa2 32. ♖xd4 ♖h2

White has a choice of advantageous endgames, though it remains to be seen if any of them are winning.

## Conclusion

12... ♔c4 13. ♕xc4 ♖xc4 14. g4 is a critical battleground which can lead to breathtaking complications.

14... ♜c7 seems like a sensible move but it has been pretty well worked out, and the verdict in the main line is that Black is losing a pawn for insufficient compensation.

14... b5 is the big main line, when I would advise you to ignore the queenside for the moment and go for an attack with 15. h4!. After 15... b4 you can consider the safe 16. ♔d5 to test your opponent's endgame technique, but 16. ♔ce2! is my main recommendation. The ensuing complications make it great fun to analyse, and from a strictly objective point of view it presents the greatest challenge to the defender.

# Chapter 6

## Accelerated Dragon



### Rare 7th Moves

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6  
7.♗c4

A) 7...♘a5

B) 7...d6

C) 7...♔a5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗b3 d6 10.h3 ♗d7 11.♖e1

C1) 11...♖fe8

C2) 11...♖ac8

C3) 11...♖fc8!? 12.♘d5!?

C31) 12...♘xd5

C32) 12...♔d8

C1) after 12...♗h5!?



13.♘g5!N

C2) after 15...b6



16.♗a4!N

C32) after 14...♘c6



15.♗h4!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3

5.c4 is a good move of course, but I prefer to aim for a Yugoslav Attack, even though the Accelerated Dragon move order gives Black several additional options.

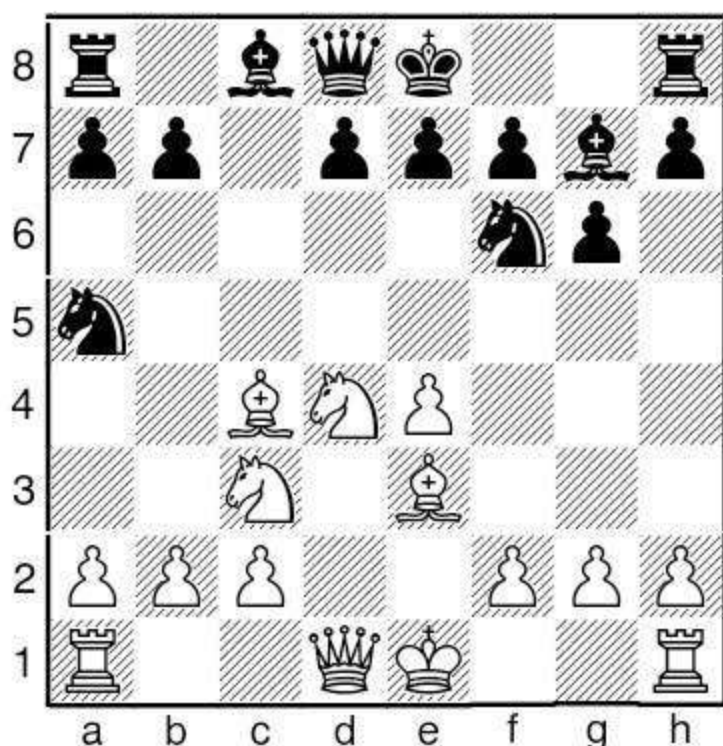


5...♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4

In this chapter we will examine **A) 7...♞a5**, **B) 7...d6** and **C) 7...♙a5**.

7...0-0 is the main move, and will be considered in the next five chapters.

### A) 7...♞a5



This move is quite rare, although it does have a few GM backers including Boris Savchenko. Retreating the bishop to b3 is perfectly acceptable, but we have an even nicer move which has not been chosen by many strong players, probably just because they did not feel the need to calculate too much at this early stage.

### 8.♙xf7†!

8.♙b3 is normal, and may end up transposing to variation A of Chapter 9.

8.♙e2 0-0 is not something I would recommend, as Black may follow up with ...d5.

### 8...♙xf7 9.e5 ♘c4

9...♞e8? 10.♞e6!+- is the main idea, while 9...♞h5 10.g4

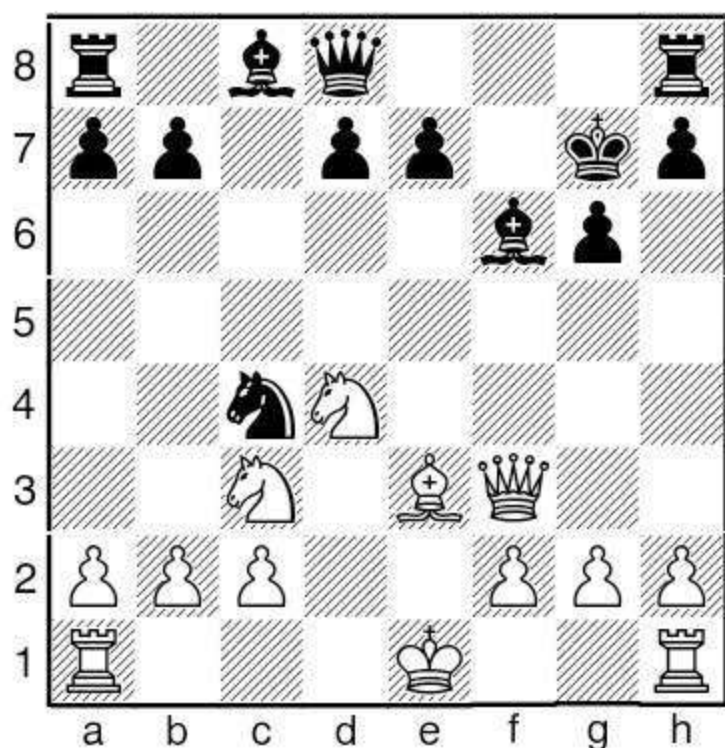
sees White regain the piece with attacking chances against Black's exposed king.

**10.exf6 ♖xf6 11.♔f3**

11.0-0!?± is another good option.

**11...♔g7**

11...d5?! is too ambitious, and 12.0-0-0 e6 13.♖h6 ♜e8 14.h4± left Black with too many weaknesses in Lakos – Zakharchenko, Zalakaros 2003.



**12.0-0**

White also has better chances after 12.0-0-0, but I don't see the need to play such a double-edged position when we can get an edge with simple play.

**12...♘xe3**

12...♘xb2?! is too risky: 13.♘d5 ♘c4 14.♞ad1→

Both 12...d6?! 13.♘d5 and 12...e6?! 13.♘e4 give White a clear advantage.

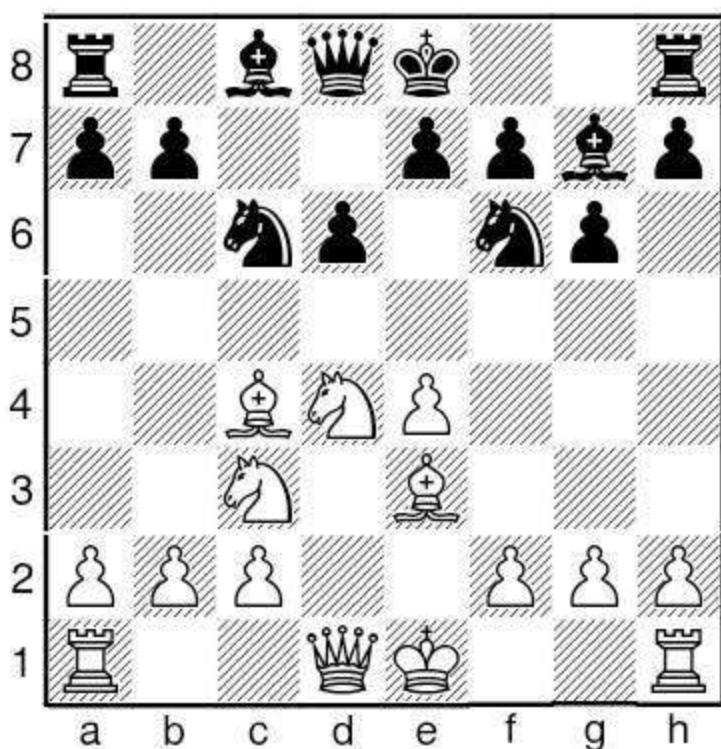
**13.fxe3 ♜f8 14.♔g3 d5 15.♞ad1 e6 16.e4±**

Bradvarevic – Ankerst, Novi Sad 1965. Black's bishops should not be underestimated, but White's activity and



better structure count for more.

## B) 7...d6



This might transpose to a normal Dragon if Black castles next but, since White hasn't played ♔d2 yet, Black has an additional option as featured below.

## 8.f3 ♔b6?!

This line seems tricky at first, but now it's well known to give Black a rather dodgy position. He grabs a pawn but gives up the dark-squared bishop and delays his development in the process, which sounds to me like a good trade for White.

9.♘f5 ♔xb2 10.♘xg7† ♔f8 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.♙xd5 ♔xg7

12...♔c3† 13.♙d2 ♔xg7 14.♖b1 is another ugly position for Black.





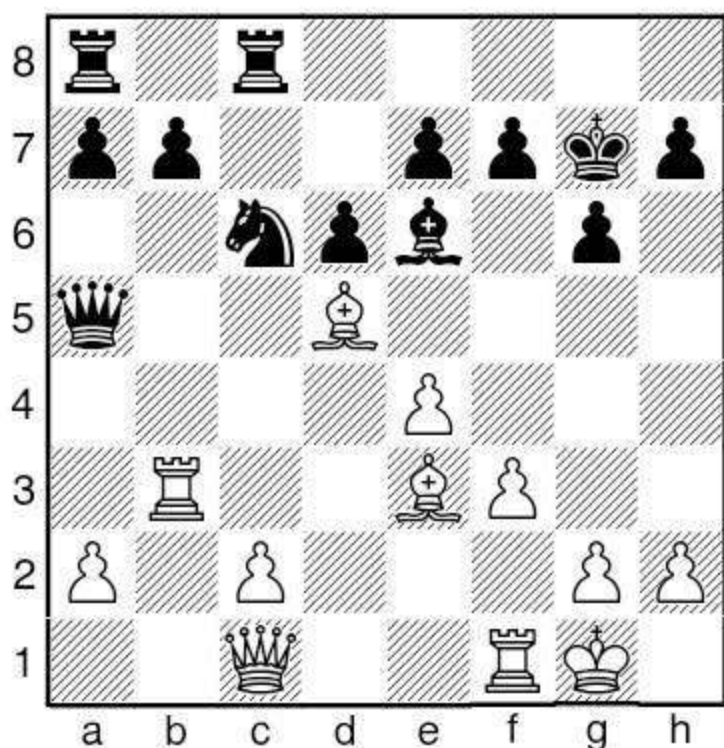
### 13.0-0 ♖c3 14.♚c1 h5

14...h6?! is inaccurate; Black needs the pawn on h5 so that he will have ...h4 available to deal with ♖g3 threats.

15.♖b1 ♞d8 16.f4 f6 17.♖f3 ♚c7 18.f5 g5 19.♖g3→

Dourerassou – Spiridonov, Noisy le Grand 2008.

Another game continued: 14...♙e6 15.♖b1 ♜hc8 16.♖b3 ♚a5



17.♖a3 ♚c7 18.♚a1† ♜g8 19.♙h6 ♞e5 20.♙xe6 fxe6 21.♜h1±  
Berg – Savchenko, Rijeka 2010.

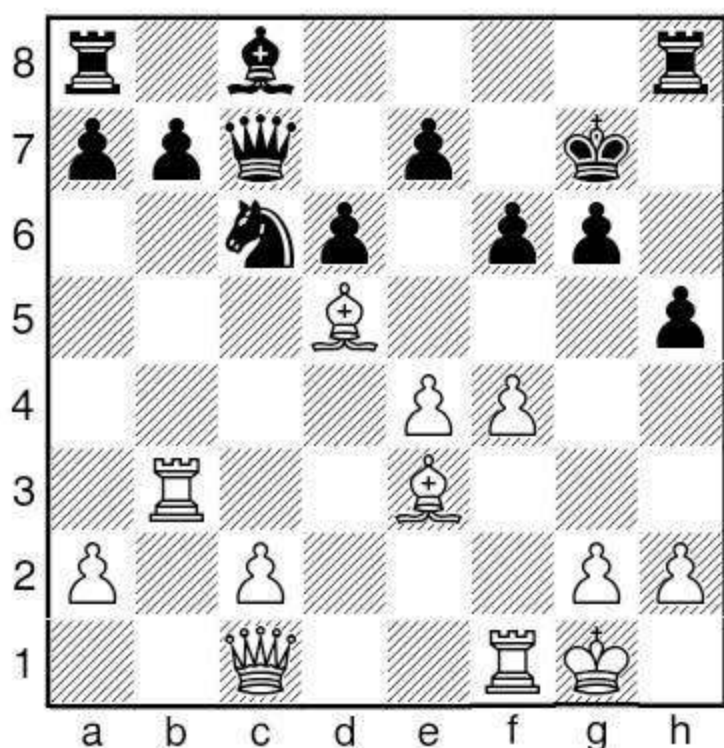
### 15.♖b1 f6 16.♖b3 ♚a5 17.f4!

17.♚b2 has been more common, but the only purpose of this move seems to be to prevent ...e6, which doesn't worry me at all. After 17...♚c7 18.f4 h4 (18...e6? 19.♙xe6+–) the position might still be good for White, but having the queen on c1 just seems so much nicer.

17.c4 ♚c7 18.c5 is another possible plan – White definitely has the better chances, although this way he aims for more of a positional edge. Instead I think we are fully justified in playing for an attack.

### 17...♚c7

17...e6 runs into 18.♙xc6 bxc6 19.c4 when, with such horrifyingly weak dark squares, Black is not destined to have much fun. We can continue exerting pressure against d6 and f6, while waiting for the right time to break with c4-c5 or e4-e5.



### 18.f5!N

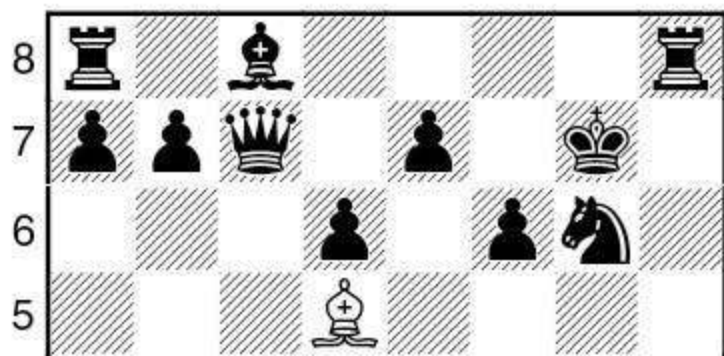
18.♙b2 has been played a couple of times, but I prefer the queen on c1 where it has easier access to the kingside. The last move gives Black's knight the e5-square, but his other pieces can barely move.

18...♘e5 19.♙d4 h4 20.fxg6 ♔xg6

20...e6? 21.♙f4! wins.

20...a5 21.a4 does not change much.

20...♘xg6 21.g4! leaves Black without a good defence:



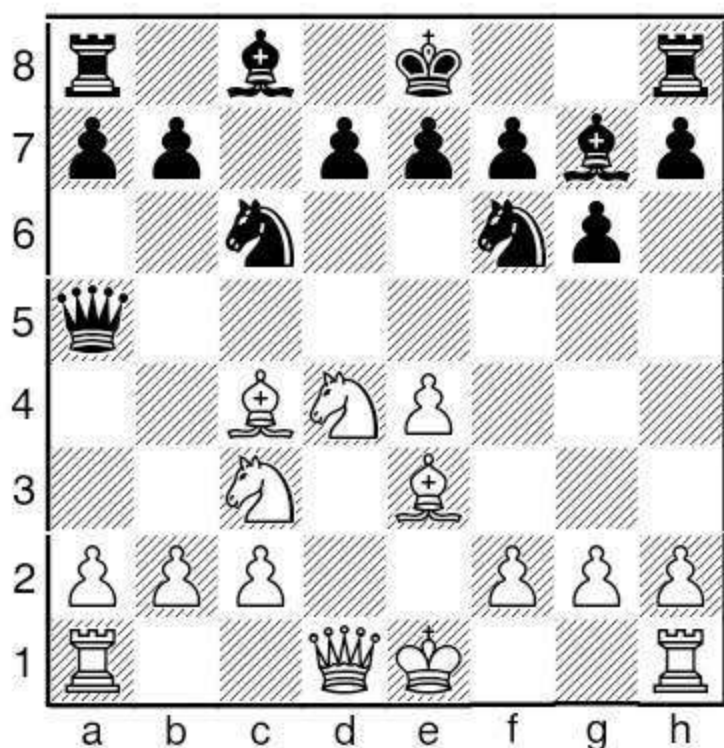


After either 21...hxg3 22.♖xg3+- or 21...♘e5 22.g5!+- Black is paralysed.

**21.♙f4 ♔g7 22.g4!+-**

Black has no good moves and will soon be crushed.

**C) 7...♙a5**



If Black wants to put his queen on a5, this is the best time to do it, as White is more or less forced to castle short. Instead 7...0-0 8.♘b3 ♙a5 allows 9.f3!?, which could be an interesting alternative to the 0-0 set-up, and was recently played by Carlsen himself.

**8.0-0**

8.f3? ♙b4! 9.♘b3 ♘xe4! is one of the points of Black's move order.

8.♘b3?! ♙b4! 9.♘d3 ♘xe4! 10.♘xe4 ♙xc3† 11.bxc3 ♙xe4 gave Black a solid advantage in Nakamura – Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 2009.

It might seem a serious concession for White to be forced to castle on the kingside. However, compared to typical

Dragon positions with 0-0, here the play is quite different because the queen on a5 is badly placed – it just gets in the way of Black's typical plans like ...♘a5, or ...b5/...a5. Now ...b5 can always be met by a2-a3 without any worries. Black also has the typical plan of ...♘xd4 and ...♙c6 available but if White avoids playing f2-f4, the positions after ♘d5 (intending to meet ...♙xd5 with exd5) seem quite pleasant for him.

Moreover, it is not easy for Black to find a new square for the queen. Going to c7 will only encourage ♙g5, with ideas of ♙xf6 and ♘d5, so the most common plan is ...♙h5. Although this might offer a few tactical tricks, it's hard to believe that the queen can be well placed there, and often it runs into trouble.

### 8...0-0 9.♙b3

9.♘b3 is a popular alternative, but I prefer not to force the black queen to move to a better square. Since Black often aims for ...♘xd4 and ...♙c6 at some point, I would like to keep in mind the possibility of a timely ♘f3, preventing Black's idea and leaving him to struggle with his piece placement. First, though, we should make a few simple improving moves.

### 9...d6 10.h3 ♙d7 11.♞e1

11.♘f3!? is possible, but for the time being I don't believe ...♘xd4 is anything to worry about. There is also a specific problem of 11...♞fc8!, when the knight is not so effective on f3, while Black intends to regroup with ...♙e8 and ...♘d7.

Black normally continues by developing one of his rooks, the main options being **C1**) 11...♞fe8, **C2**) 11...♞ac8 and **C3**) 11...♞fc8!?

11...♙h5 12.♘f3 (12.♘xc6!? bxc6 13.♙d2 was interesting in Nemec – Prevenios, email 2006, but such ideas aren't particularly required) 12...♘a5 (12...♞fc8 13.♘g5 ♞f8 14.f4 transposes to variation C1 while 12 ♞ac8 and 12 ♞fe8 are



also likely to transpose to one of the lines below) 13. ♖g5

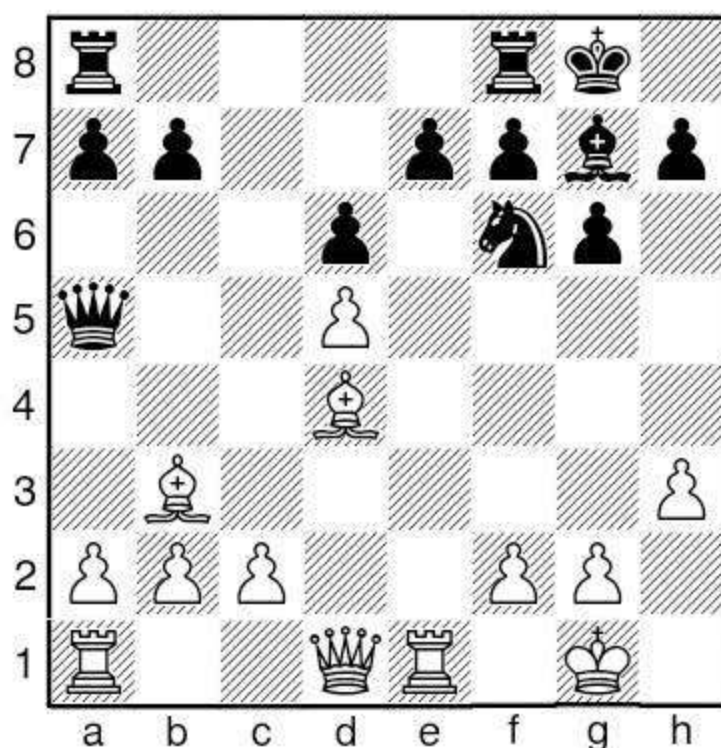
♜xb3 14. axb3 N±

11... ♞xd4

This exchange seems premature when White has yet to commit to f2-f4.

12. ♖xd4 ♖c6 13. ♞d5 ♖xd5 14. exd5

This structure is great for White when f2-f4 has not been played. Not only have we saved a tempo, but our king is also more secure, with no annoying queen checks from b6 or c5 on the horizon.



14... ♜fe8 15. c4!?

This is certainly not the only good move, but White's position is strong enough to justify this ambitious approach.

15... a6

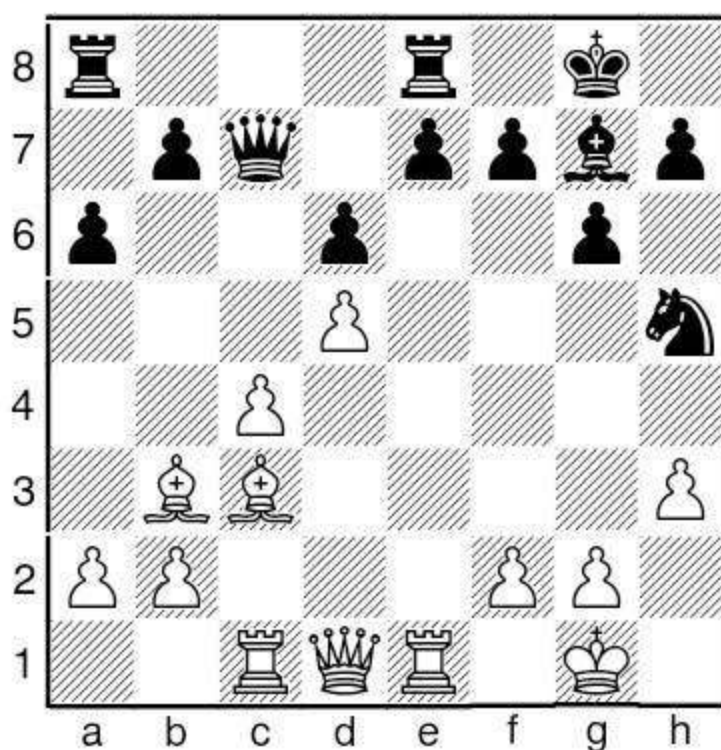
15... ♞d7 16. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 17. ♖a4 ♜ad8 (After 17... ♜c7 18. ♜d4† ♜g8 19. ♜e4± White even has options like ♜h4 in the future) 18. a3 a6 19. b4 ♜c7 20. ♜d4† ♜g8 21. c5± Zezulkin – Grecescu, Bad Zwischenahn 2002.

16. ♖c3

After 16. ♜e3 ♞h5 17. a3 ♖xd4 18. ♜xd4 ♞g7 19. ♖c2 e5 Black managed to eventually hold a worse position

in Bologan – Muco, Kavala 1991.

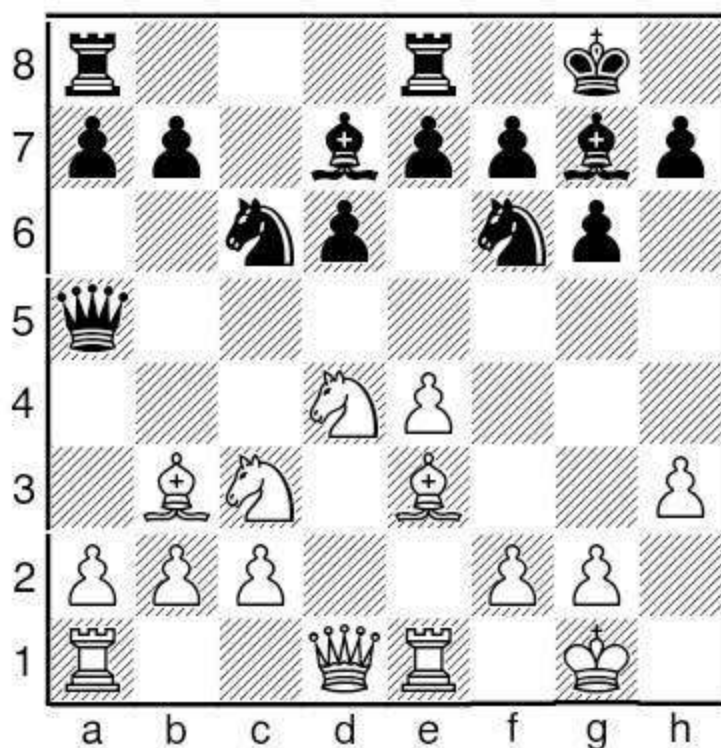
16...♔c7 17.♖c1 ♘h5



Menkinovski – Stojanovski, Skopje 2011. White has a few good continuations, but I like:

18.♗a4N 18...♖ec8 19.♔d2±

C1) 11...♖fe8



12.♘f3!



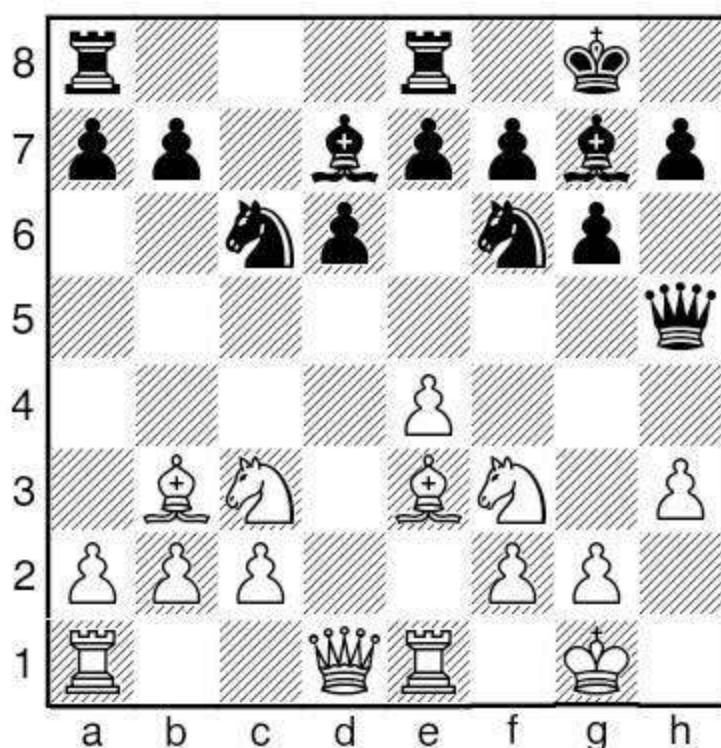
12.f4 ♖xd4 13.♙xd4 ♙c6= gives Black an improved version of the note above, as ♖d5 will be less effective with the pawn on f4.

## 12...♔h5!?

12...b5 13.a3 doesn't worry White as usual, for instance: 13...♖ab8 14.♔e2 a6 15.♖ad1± Mitkov – Toma, Bergen 2001.

12...♖ac8 is met by 13.♔d2 when it is hard to find a useful move for Black. 13...♔h5 (13...a6 is pointless after 14.♖ad1; 13...b5 14.a3± doesn't help Black much either; 13...♘e5? 14.♘xe5 ♔xe5 15.♙xa7±) 14.♘g5! ♘e5 15.f4 ♘c4 16.♙xc4 ♖xc4 17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5± Lanc – H. Rudolf, Austria 1992.

The text move is an interesting try; Black's idea is to remove the b3-bishop and then continue playing slowly. However, I found an attractive new way to counter it.



## 13.♘g5!N

After 13.♔e2 ♘a5 Black seems okay, as the b3-bishop will be eliminated and it is hard to target the black queen. 14.♙f4 a6 15.♔e3 ♘xb3 16.axb3 ♙c6∞ Santiago – Stamenkovic, Cuiaba 2014.



13. ♔d2!? works out okay after 13... ♖e5 14. ♘g5!N 14... h6 15. f4 hxg5 16. fxe5 dxe5 17. ♙xg5± when the queen seems completely out of place on h5. However, it was not so easy to prove something against 13... ♖a5!N. I don't particularly like losing my light-squared bishop because the ♘g5 jump loses its power.

### 13... ♜f8 14. f4

Black faces an unpleasant dilemma concerning his queen.

### 14... ♜ad8

After 14... ♔xd1 15. ♜axd1± it is hard to deal with the threat of e4-e5.

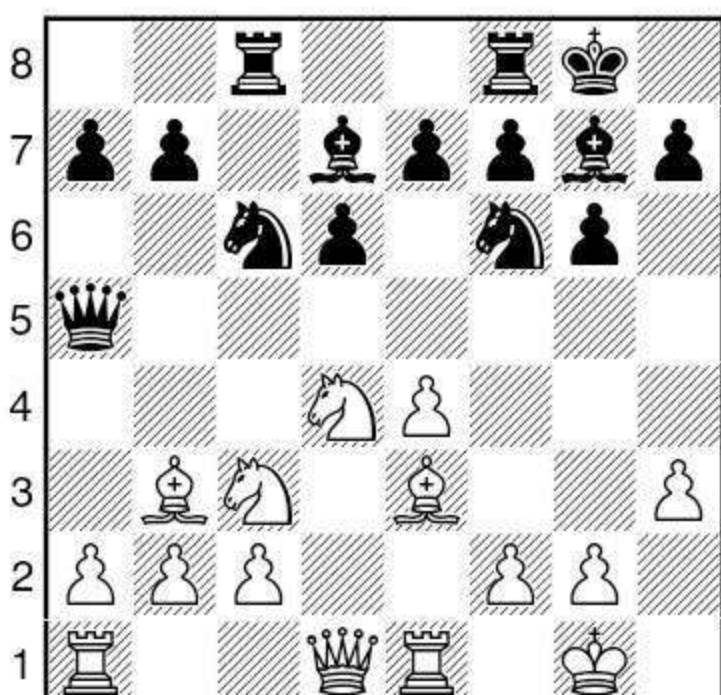
### 15. ♘f3!

15. ♔d2 runs into 15... h6 16. ♘f3 ♙xh3!, so the text move is the right way to avoid the queen exchange.

### 15... ♙c8 16. ♔e2±

The f2-f4 move is a nice addition as long as White has time to put the knight on f3. Black's position is rather cramped and his queen remains oddly placed.

### C2) 11... ♜ac8



## 12. ♘f3!?

12. ♔e2!? also makes a lot of sense, as White gets ready to meet ... ♘e5 with f2-f4 since the c4-square is covered. The most likely continuation is 12... ♘xd4 13. ♙xd4 ♙c6 14. ♖ad1 intending ♘d5. It is certainly possible to search for an advantage here as well, although Black remains solid and the exchange on d4 has given him some breathing space.

## 12... ♔h5

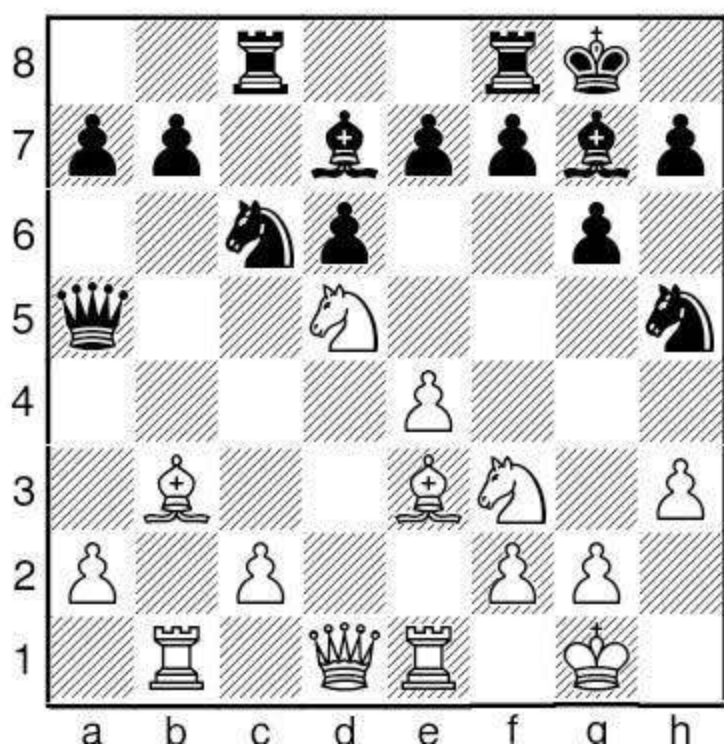
The fact that this is such a common theme in these positions shows how hard it is for Black to find appropriate squares for his pieces. Here are a few brief lines showing how White can play against other moves:

12... ♖fe8 transposes to 12... ♖ac8 in the notes to variation C1 above.

12... b5 13. a3 doesn't particularly help Black.

After 12... ♖fd8 13. ♔e2 Black struggles to find anything useful to do. 13... ♔h5 (13... ♙e8 14. ♖ad1±) 14. ♖ad1 It's hard to see what the rook is doing on d8.

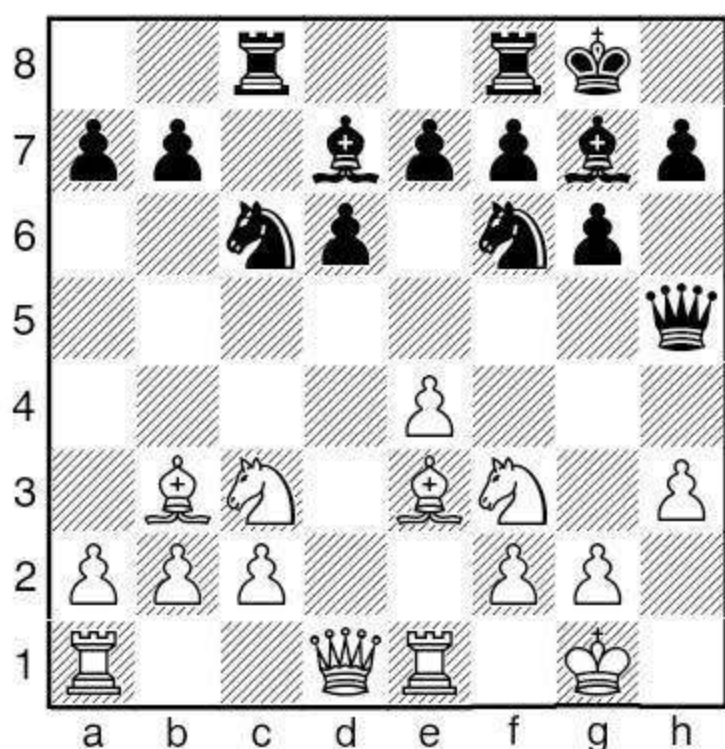
12... ♘h5 13. ♘d5!?N introduces a nice tactical point:  
13... ♙xb2 14. ♖b1 ♙g7





15. ♖xe7! ♖xe7 16. ♔xd6 ♔d8 17. ♕g5 ♜e8 18. ♜bd1±

12... ♔c7 13. ♕g5 ♘a5 14. ♕xf6 exf6 15. ♖d5 ♔d8 16. c3± White had a nice positional edge in T.L. Petrosian – R. Mamedov, Bursa 2010.



13. ♔e2 h6!?

Playing for ...g5 is the only serious attempt to justify the queen on h5, but the whole plan seems rather dodgy.

Unlike in the ...♜fe8 lines, 13... ♘a5? isn't possible here due to 14. ♕xa7!.

13... a6

This has been played a few times, but it seems pointless.

14. ♜ad1

If Black's idea was to play ...♘a5 next, the text move prevents it anyway.

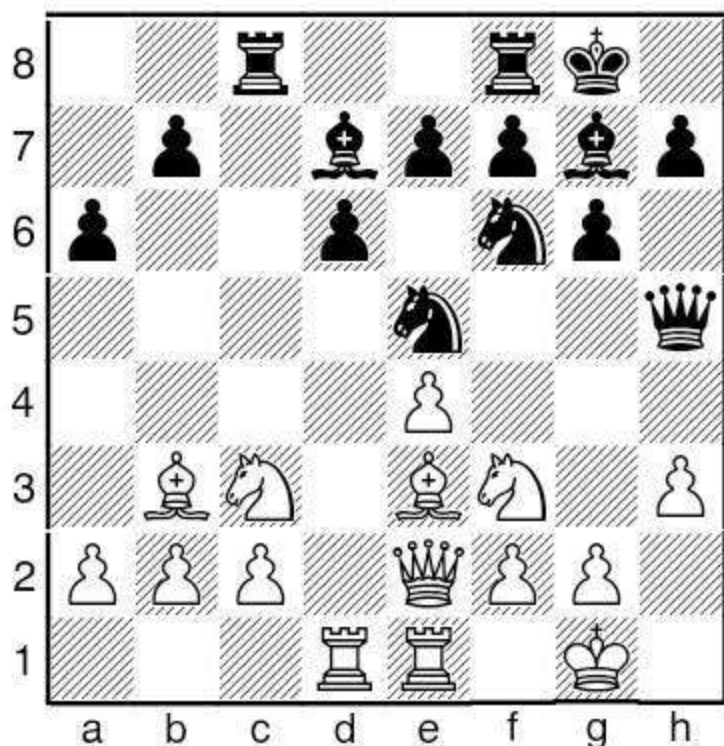
14... ♖e5

14... ♘a5? 15. ♖d5 ♘xd5 16. ♜xd5+–

14... b5 gives us no trouble after 15. ♕f4 intending ♖d5.

14... h6 15. ♖d5!N 15... ♘xd5 16. exd5 ♖e5 17. ♖xe5

♙xe2 18.♖xe2 dxe5 19.c3±



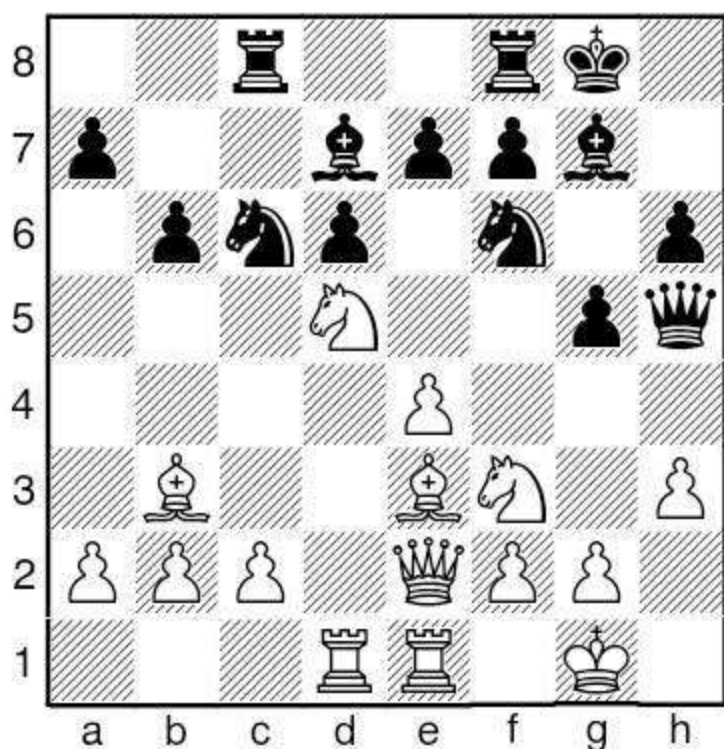
15.♙xe4 ♙xe5 16.f4 ♙a5 17.♙f2±

Fedorov – Malakhov, Warsaw 2005.

14.♖ad1 g5 15.♙d5 b6

Both 15...♙xe4 16.♙d4!± and 15...g4 16.♙h2± give Black serious problems.

15...♙xd5 16.exd5 ♙e5 (16...♙a5 17.♙xa7±) 17.♙xe4 ♙xe2 18.♖xe2 ♙xe5 19.♙xa7± just leaves White a pawn up.





## 16. ♖a4!? N

Maintaining the pressure.

16. c3 ♘xd5 17. ♙xd5 ♘e5 18. ♘xe5 ♔xe2 19. ♖xe2 ♙xe5 let Black off the hook in Wang Hao – Malakhov, Khanty-Mansiysk (1.1) 2005.

## 16... ♖fe8

16... ♘xd5 17. exd5 ♘e5 18. ♙xd7 ♘xd7 19. ♙d4 leaves Black with too many weak spots in his position.

## 17. c3 ♘xe4 18. ♙xb6 ♘f6 19. ♘xf6† ♙xf6 20. ♙d4

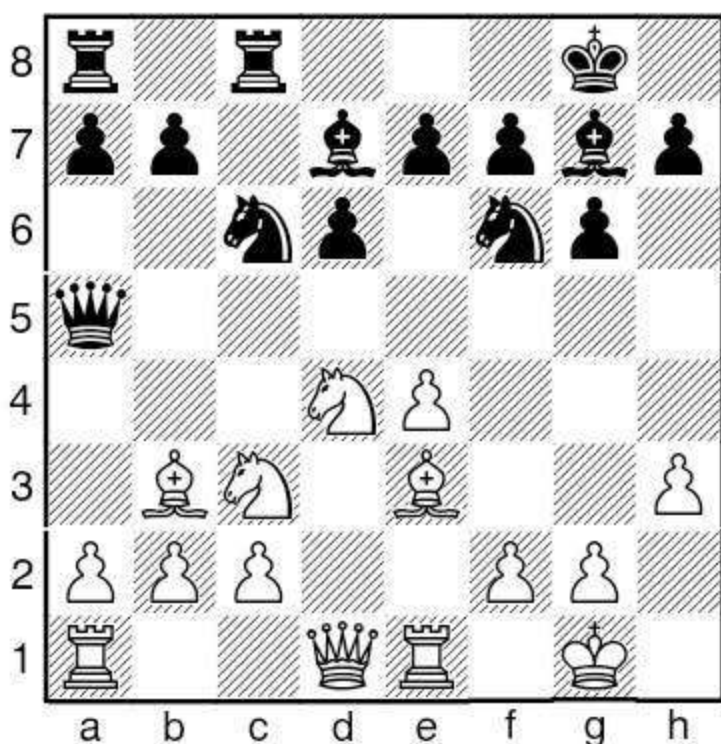
White might be able to liquidate into a pleasant position with 20. ♙xa7 ♖a8 21. ♔e4!?, but I don't think we need such fancy tactics.

20. ♙e3!? also seems preferable for White.

## 20... ♘xd4 21. ♖xd4

White has a pleasant edge without many worries, especially as the queen remains out of play on h5.

### C3) 11... ♖fc8!?



Despite being less popular than the lines above, this seems to me like Black's best continuation, especially in terms of meeting White's ♖f3 plan. Having seen the other lines, you will have noticed Black's difficulties in finding good squares for his pieces. After the text move, he has the option of regrouping with ...♙e8 and ...♘d7 without losing coordination. The only real drawback of Black's last move is that the rook has moved away from the centre, which explains our next move.

## 12. ♘d5!?

Black's rook appears misplaced on c8, and it may well have to go back to e8 at some point.

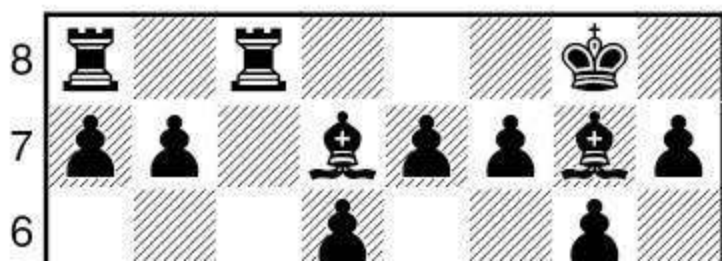
As mentioned above, 12. ♘f3 is not so effective here due to 12... ♙e8!? intending ...♘d7, when Black's pieces are not badly placed and he has plenty of useful moves available.

12. ♙e2 ♙h5 13. ♘f3 h6!? 14. ♖ad1 g5 15. ♘d5 ♘xd5 16. ♙xd5 (16. exd5 ♘e5 has a key difference compared to the analogous position from the ...♖ac8 line, namely that the a7-pawn is protected!) 16... ♙xb2 17. ♖b1 ♙c3 The position was rather messy in Carlsen – Radjabov, Medias 2010.

We will consider **C31)** 12... ♘xd5 and **C32)** 12... ♙d8.

### **C31) 12... ♘xd5 13. exd5 ♘e5**

After 13... ♘xd4?! 14. ♙xd4 ♙xd4 15. ♙xd4 ♖e8 16. ♖e3 White was in total control in Petrolo – A. Roberts, email 2005. In addition to the heavy pressure along the e-file, White has the strong plan of switching his major pieces to the kingside to create a powerful attack.





## 14. ♖g5

14. ♖e2 ♖a6! seemed okay for Black in Ansell – Kirk, England 2013.

## 14... ♖e8N

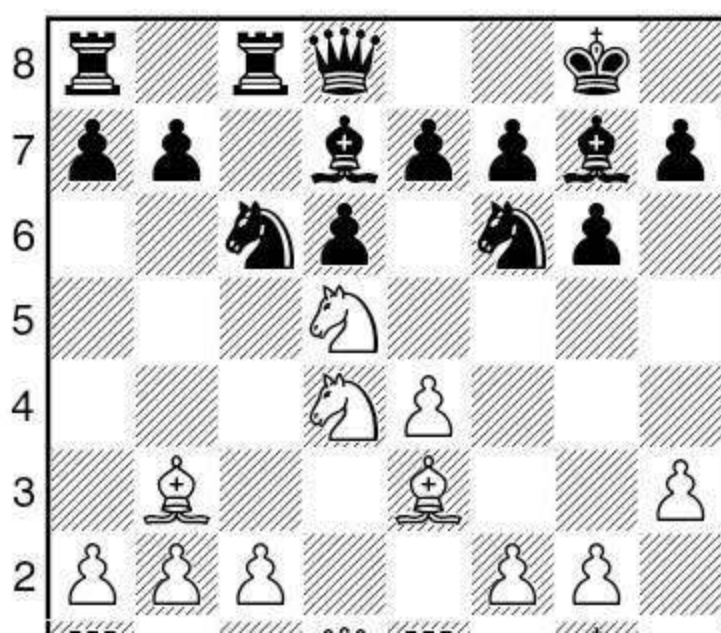
14... ♖c5 15. c3 was played in Kovalev – Bogdanovich, Moscow 2010, when Black felt compelled to put his rook on e8 anyway.

Another possibility is 14... h6!?N 15. ♖d2 (15. ♖xe7 ♘c4! ♞) 15... ♖c7 (15... ♖c5 16. c3 ♖e8 17. ♖e4!?±) 16. ♖e2 when the game continues, but it seems to me that Black is still struggling to find the correct places for his pieces, and he will most likely have to waste time with ... ♖e8 in the near future.

## 15. c3±

Rather a short line, but I am happy to leave it here and say that Black still has some problems to solve. The bishop on g5 is annoying, but ... h6 would permanently weaken Black's kingside. An exchange of knights would leave White with an excellent position so he may play ♘f3 at some point. Alternatively he may just continue developing with ♖d2 followed by doubling rooks on the e-file.

## C32) 12... ♖d8





It makes sense to retreat the queen now that the king's rook has been tucked away on c8. Black also avoids an open e-file for the time being.

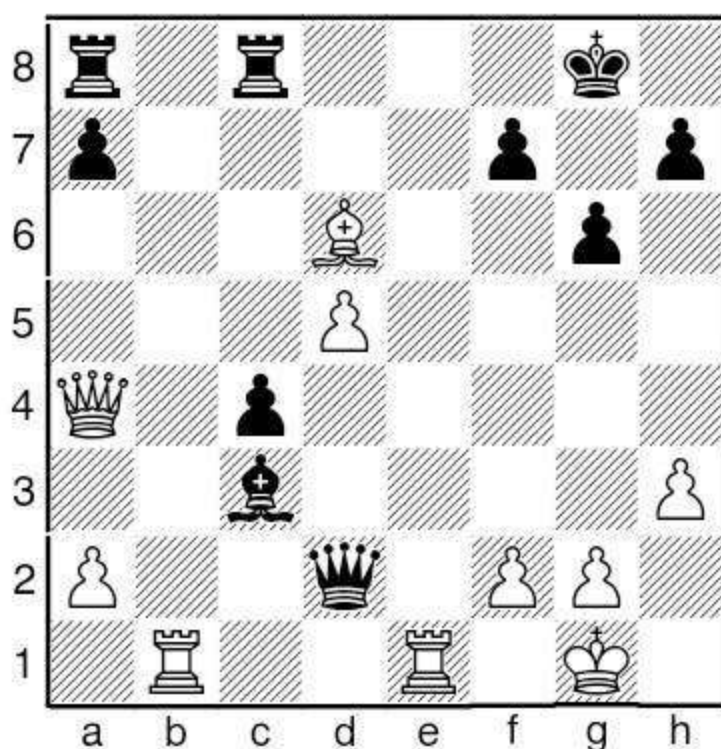
### 13. ♖g5!

13. ♖xf6† ♙xf6 14. c3 has scored well but I think the text move is more challenging. Of course, it is important to check that Black cannot exploit the hanging knight on d4.

### 13... ♘xd4

13... e6 14. ♖xf6† ♙xf6 15. ♙xf6 ♚xf6 16. ♖b5 clearly favoured White in Malik – Kulhanek, Ostrava 2007.

The natural 13... ♘xd5N has not yet been tested. A sample continuation is: 14. ♖xc6 bxc6 15. exd5 c5 16. ♙xe7 ♚b6 17. c3 c4 18. ♙a4 ♙xa4 19. ♚xa4 ♚xb2 20. ♙xd6 ♙xc3 21. ♖ab1 ♚d2

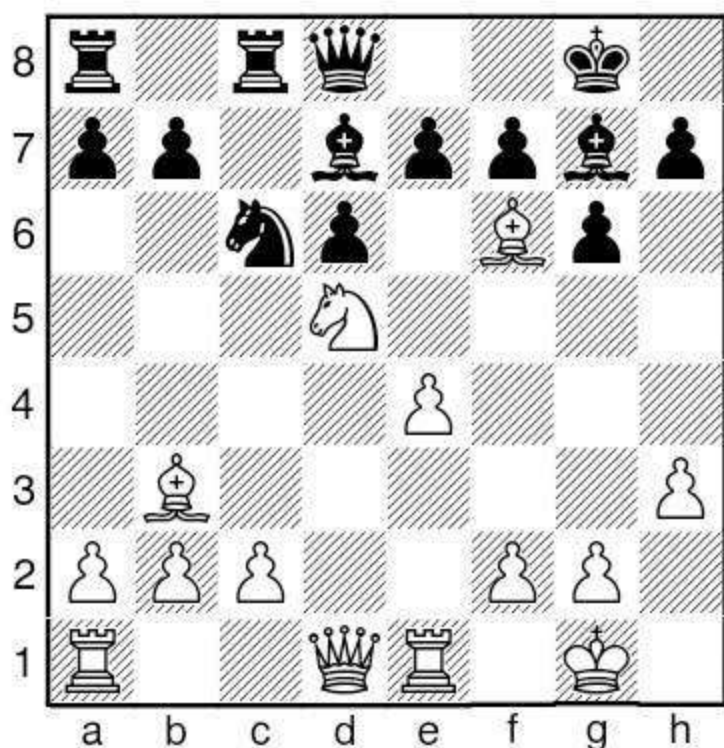


22. ♖bd1!? (22. ♖ed1 ♚e2 23. ♙g3 ♙d2 could be complicated)  
 22... ♚xe1† (22... ♚b2 23. ♖e4!±) 23. ♖xe1 ♙xe1 24. ♙e5!± White is on top, since 24... c3 25. ♚f4 c2 26. ♚f6 leads to mate.

### 14. ♙xf6 ♘c6

14... exf6 15. ♚xd4 ♙c6 led to a quick draw in one game, but after 16. c3N it is obvious White has a clear edge. Black

can get an opposite-coloured-bishop position if he wants, but he would have to suffer for a long time with virtually no hope of winning.



## 15. ♗h4!?N

I feel that retaining the bishop makes life a lot more unpleasant for Black, as the pressure on e7 makes it hard for him to untangle. The g7-bishop can be blocked with c2-c3, so it's clearly not as valuable as the bishop on h4. Of course the b2-pawn is hanging, so we will check what happens if Black takes it.

I would like to include the game continuation after 15. ♗xg7 ♖xg7 as well, because White played in an interesting and instructive way that might be applicable in other variations 16. ♔d2 ♗e6 17. ♖e3 ♔g8 18. ♜ae1 ♕f8 19. ♜c3 ♜ab8 20. ♕g5 ♔g7 21. h4 b5 22. h5 f6 23. ♕g3 ♕f7 24. f4± White's pieces are working together in perfect harmony, Malik – Simacek, Ostrava 2014. Of course Black's play can be improved, but it is worth keeping ideas such as the ♜e3-c3 manoeuvre in mind.

## 15... ♗xb2

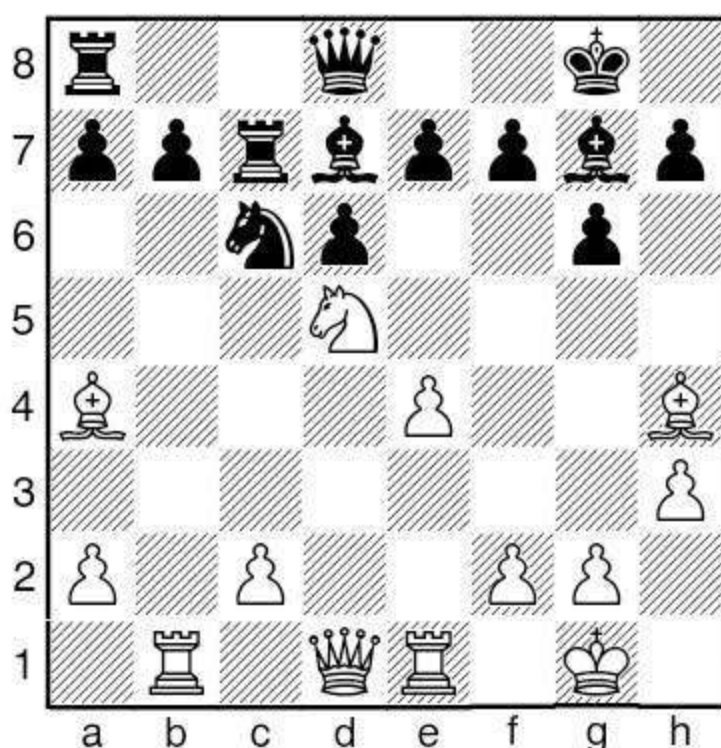
This must be critical. Instead after 15... ♗e6 16. c3 ♕d7



17.f4 it is hard for Black to do anything useful.

**16.♖b1 ♔g7 17.♕a4 ♜c7**

**17...f6 18.♖xb7±**



**18.e5!**

18.♖xc7 ♜xc7 is not so clear. The text move forces exchanges which open the position, leaving White far better placed to exploit his advantage of rook versus knight and pawn.

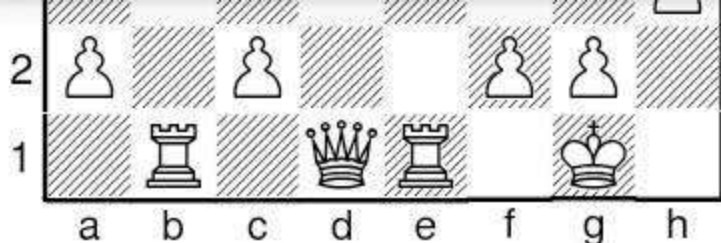
**18...♕xe5 19.♕xe7 ♘xe7 20.♖xc7 ♜xc7 21.♕xd7 ♜xd7 22.♖xe5±**

White has excellent winning chances.

## Conclusion

7...♘a5 is playable, but 8.♕xf7†! is a nice pseudo-sacrifice which promises White a lasting initiative.

7...d6 is a reasonable move if used to transpose to normal lines. If, on the other hand, Black gets greedy with ...♜b6xb2, White gets more than enough compensation – especially if he refrains from unnecessarily posting his



## 18.e5!

18. ♖xc7 ♔xc7 is not so clear. The text move forces exchanges which open the position, leaving White far better placed to exploit his advantage of rook versus knight and pawn.

18... ♕xe5 19. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 20. ♖xc7 ♔xc7 21. ♕xd7 ♔xd7 22. ♖xe5±

White has excellent winning chances.

## Conclusion

7... ♖a5 is playable, but 8. ♕xf7†! is a nice pseudo-sacrifice which promises White a lasting initiative.

7... d6 is a reasonable move if used to transpose to normal lines. If, on the other hand, Black gets greedy with ... ♖b6xb2, White gets more than enough compensation – especially if he refrains from unnecessarily posting his queen on b2 and instead keeps the focus on the kingside.

7... ♖a5 is a major option which pretty much forces 8.0-0. Black thus avoids any danger of a Yugoslav-type attack, but his queen is not well placed and it will often have to waste time moving again. After the normal developing moves 8...0-0 9. ♕b3 d6 10.h3 ♕d7 11. ♖e1,

I suggest giving serious consideration to a timely ♖f3, avoiding simplifications and leaving Black with the problem of how to improve his pieces. White is well centralized and can choose the right moment to plonk a knight on d5, knowing that the exd5 structure will practically guarantee lasting pressure along the e-file.



# Chapter 7

## Accelerated Dragon



### Various 8th Moves

#### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Bc4 0-0  
8.Bb3

A) 8...a6

B) 8...d5!?

C) 8...e6

D) 8...a5 9.0-0!

D1) 9...a4

D2) 9...d6

D3) 9...Nxd4 10.Bxd4 d6

D31) 11.a4

D32) 11.Qe2!?

A) after 10...bxc6



11.Qd6!N

D1) after 13...Nd6!?



14.Nc5!N

D32) after 14...Ba5



15.Qc3!N

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Bc4 0-0  
7.Bb3

## 8. ♖b3

8.f3?! ♖b6! is well known to be good for Black, so it is necessary to retreat the bishop before touching the f-pawn. This change in White's move order gives Black some extra options compared to a normal Dragon.

In this chapter we will examine **A) 8...a6**, **B) 8...d5!?**, **C) 8...e6** and **D) 8...a5**.

8...♖e8 will be covered in Chapter 8 and 8...d6 in Chapters 9 and 10.

8...♖a5 9.0-0 transposes to the 7...♖a5 variation, as covered in variation C of the previous chapter. This move order gives White the extra option of 9.f3, but I don't feel the need to change tracks.

8...b6 seems a weird choice. 9.f3 ♖b7 10.♖d2 ♘a5 11.0-0-0 ♘xb3† 12.axb3 d5 13.e5 ♘d7 14.f4± is a good path for White to follow, Motylev – Faibisovich, Swidnica 1999.

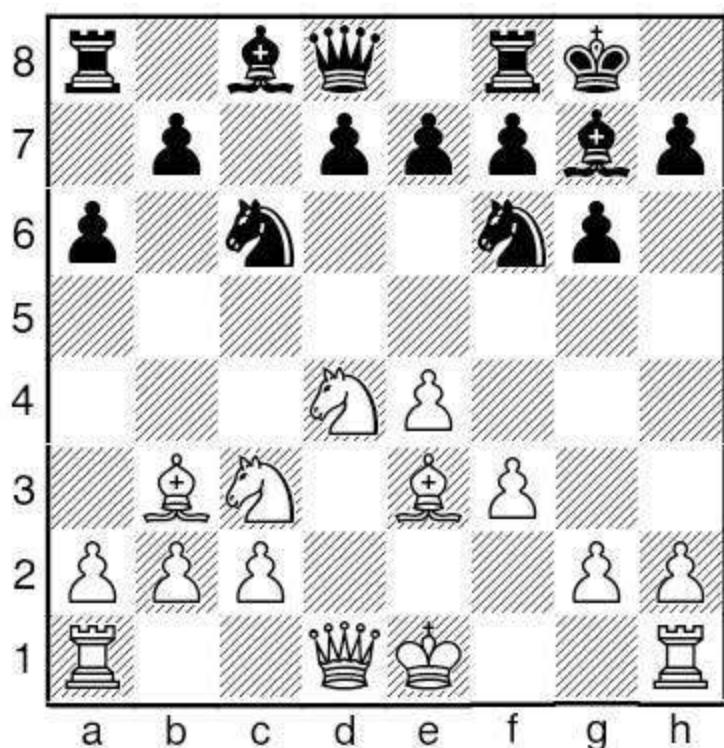
8...♘g4 has been a significant option in terms of sheer numbers, but it is mostly ignored these days because it soon leads to a pleasant position for White 9.♖xg4 ♘xd4 10.♖d1 ♘c6 (10...♘xb3 11.axb3 a5 12.♖d4± gave White a great version of a Dragon in A. Muzychuk – Adnani, Gibraltar 2012) 11.♖d2± I didn't find any especially instructive games from this position, but it's just a typical Dragon set-up without the d4- and f6-knights. The d4-knight wasn't doing much anyway, but the one on f6 was crucial for Black's defensive plans, so it's obvious who this trade benefits. I will not analyse any further, as the variations given in this and the previous chapter contain all the ideas you need to know to handle the Dragon structure.

### A) 8...a6 9.f3

At first I thought 9.h4 might be strong, as the same move is



also interesting against ... $\text{Re8}$ , as shown in the next chapter. However, after  $9...d5! 10.exd5 \text{Ra5}$ , it looks as though ...a6 may prove more useful than ... $\text{Re8}$ , as it supports ...b5 in some lines. Therefore I suggest sticking with the text move.



### 9...e6 10.♘xc6!?

As we will see later, this knight exchange is playable against both  $8...e6$  and  $8...Re8$ . Considering that Black's ...a6 move has virtually no value in the ensuing structure, it makes sense to try and make it work here.

After  $10.f4?! d6$  the free ...a6 move gives Black a slightly improved version of an already fine position.

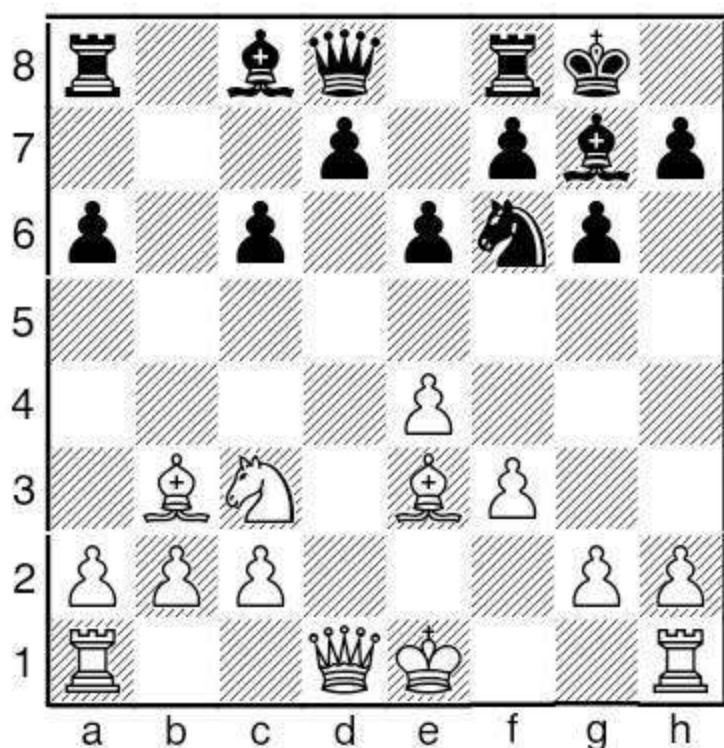
$10.0-0 d5$  is nothing special for White, as I prefer to do without the weakening f2-f3 when playing against the isolated queen's pawn.

### 10...bxc6

Some players might not mind defending a slightly worse endgame after  $10...dxc6 11.\text{Qxd8 Rxd8}$ , but it doesn't look like much fun for Black. It is important that he has played ...a6, as he is unable to fortify his queenside with ...b6. Play may continue  $12.a4 a5 13.\text{Qf2}\pm$  with a pleasant edge for



White.



### 11. ♔d6!N

Throwing a spanner in Black's plans.

11. ♕c5 ♖e8 (11...d5!?N is an interesting exchange sacrifice)  
12. ♕d6 was played in Darling – Mithran, Istanbul 2012,  
when 12... ♞d5!N would have been critical.

### 11... ♞e8 12. ♔d2

The queen returns to its usual square, leaving Black's knight clearly misplaced. Black has a decent pawn centre, but the combination of the bad knight and the tempo wasted on ...a6 makes White's life surprisingly easy.

### 12...d5 13. 0-0-0↑

I don't see how Black can get anything on the queenside, as the b3-bishop nullifies all play on the b-file, while White's attack with h4-h5 is coming fast.

### B) 8...d5!?



The ...d7-d5 move is a recurring theme in the Accelerated Dragon, so it is interesting that it was not taken seriously in this particular position until a couple of years ago. Perhaps the change was due to the evolving tastes of the engines, as they began to realize that trying to hold on to the extra pawn after exd5 actually allows Black to claim decent compensation. Some positive results at GM level have seen the text move pick up a lot of steam recently, so it should be studied carefully.

### 9.exd5 ♖a5 10.0-0!?

The safe approach, developing and asking Black how he intends to regain the pawn.

10.♔d2 ♘xb3 11.♗xb3 b5! prepares counterplay in case White goes for long castling. Of course this option could be analysed further, but I would rather avoid castling into an attack. In two recent games White went for other options, but Black obtained adequate play in both of them: 12.♗xb5 (12.a3 ♖b7 13.♖d1 a5! 14.♗c5 ♔c8 15.0-0 ♖d8 16.♗xb7 ♔xb7= Rasulov – Bakalchuk, Jerusalem 2015) 12...♔xd5 13.♔xd5 ♗xd5= Saric – Yakovich, Sochi 2015.

10.♔f3 was quite possibly the reason why 8...d5 used to be considered bad, but a recent game by Shirov shed new light on Black's chances: 10...♖g4 11.♔g3 ♗xb3! (11...♖h5?! allowed 12.d6! exd6 13.0-0 with a pleasant position for White in Ganguly – Barnaure, Abu Dhabi 2014) 12.axb3 (12.♗xb3 b5=)





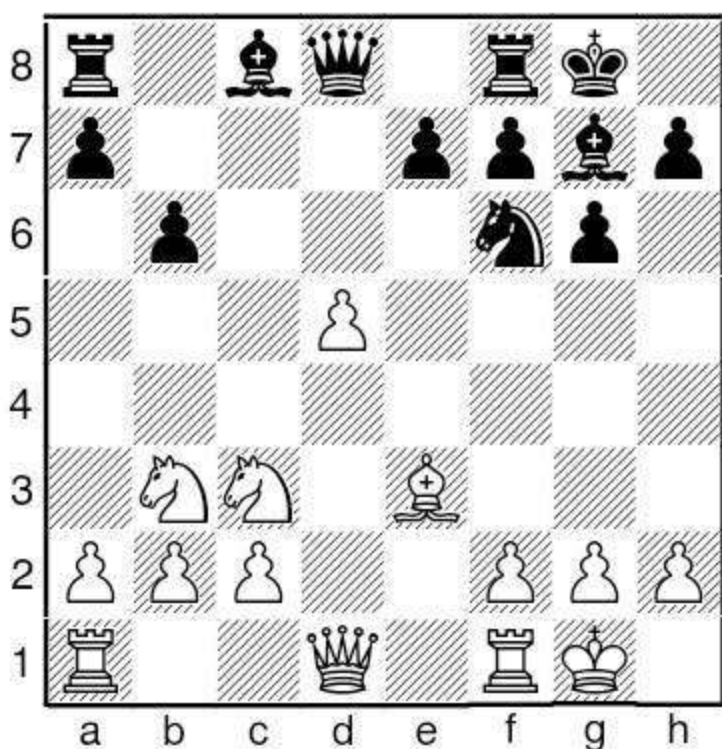
12...♗h5! 13.f3 (13.d6 can be met by either ...e5 or ...♘g4 with messy complications) 13...♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♔xd5 15.0-0-0 ♖ac8 In Kulaots – Shirov, Jyvaskyla 2014, Black's counterplay was strong enough to offset the misplaced bishop on h5.

### 10...♘xb3

10...b6 11.♘c6! ♘xc6 12.dxc6 ♔c7 13.g3 favoured White in Platonov – Cherepkov, Minsk 1962. After the further 13...♘g4 14.♗g5 ♔e5?, White could have obtained a decisive advantage with 15.♗f4N 15...♔h5 16.h4, as Black is just a pawn down with no real attack.

### 11.♘xb3 b6

After 11...b5 12.♘xb5± Black's bishop pair will not offer full compensation for the pawn deficit.



### 12.d6!N

White's best bet is to trade in his extra pawn for a positional edge.

12.♗f4 ♗b7 13.d6 exd6 (13...e6!?N would have given Black decent compensation as well) 14.♔xd6 Leaving the pawn on d6 would not help here, because White has a hard time neutralizing the g7-bishop. 14...♘h5 15.♔xd8 ♖fxd8 16.♗e3

♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♜dc8= A draw was soon agreed in Kulaots – Khalifman, Jurmala 2013.

12.♙d2 ♙b7 13.♞ad1 ♚c7!?N seems decent for Black, as 14.♞b5? ♚c4 is pointless for White.

I considered 12.♙d3!?N on the basis that 12...♙b7 (12...♙f5 13.♙d2±) 13.♞ad1 13...♚c7 14.♙d4 ♞ad8 15.♞b5! is good for White. However, Black can improve with 13...♚c8! with ideas of ...♙a6.

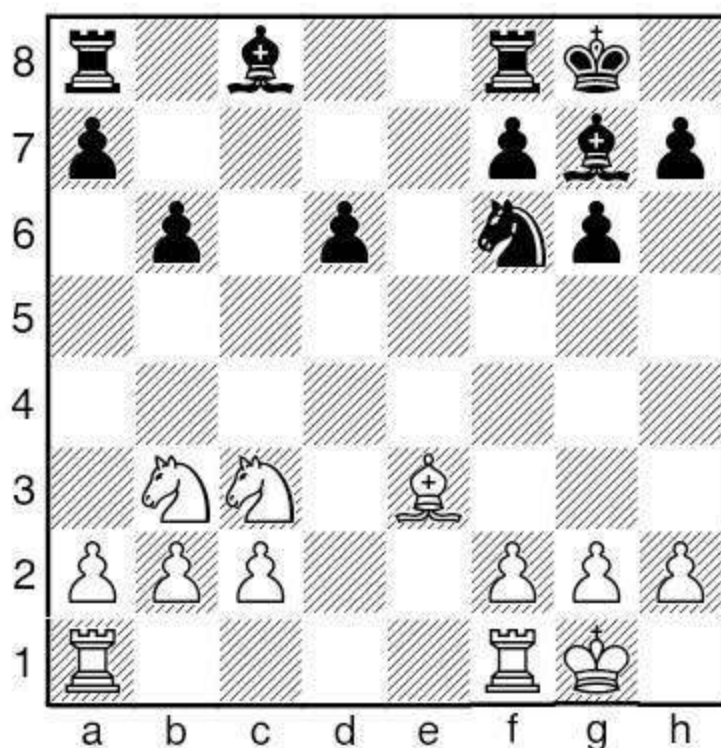
## 12...exd6

12...e6? is not a serious option here, as 13.♙f3 gives White time to put a rook on d1 on the next move.

Neither 12...♙a6 13.dxe7 ♚xe7 14.♞e1± nor 12...♙b7 13.dxe7 ♚xe7 14.♙d4± is quite enough for Black to equalize.

12...♙xd6 13.♙xd6 exd6

I feel the queen exchange probably offers Black the best chances of holding, although the computer thinks the other way round. Regardless of which side is right, the endgame is rather one-sided.



14.♞fe1!



After 14.♖ad1 ♘g4 15.♙d4 ♜e5 the prospect of ...♘c4 is annoying.

14...♙f5!?

14...♙b7 15.♖ad1 ♖fd8 (15...d5 16.♙d4±) 16.♙d4±

14...♘g4 15.♙d4 ♜e5 16.f4 ♘c4 17.♙xg7 ♚xg7 18.♖e7 ♜xb2 19.♘d4 gives White a great deal of activity for the sacrificed pawn.

15.♘d4 ♙d7

This is perhaps the best defensive idea, since the d4-knight is slightly misplaced. Black may follow up with either ...♘g4 or (after a preparatory ...♖fe8) ...♘e4. However, he is still not able to claim full equality, and White can squeeze for a long time against the isolated pawn.

13.♙d4 ♖e8 14.♚d2

We have reached another of those tough-to-assess positions: White has the easier game, but how significant is his advantage? Black has a lot of options, so it makes more sense to discuss the possible plans than to analyse deeply. I don't fully trust my engine's assessment, as it often suggests ...♙f8 for Black, which makes little sense to me. It is not easy to suggest an active plan for Black, whereas White has so many useful moves, such as f2-f3, ♖fe1, ♖ad1 and so on. Even the a4-a5 advance might pose some annoying problems for Black.

14...♙a6!?

In the event of 14...♙b7 15.♖fe1 ♚d7 16.f3 ♖xe1† 17.♖xe1 ♖e8 I think White should keep one pair of rooks on the board. Black's rook has no entry points on the e-file, so White could play either 18.♖d1 to make Black worry about the d-pawn, or even 18.♖a1!? followed by a4-a5.

15.♖fe1 ♚d7



## 16.f3!

16.a4 ♖c4! would be annoying, so we will start by making a simple improving move.

## 16...♖c4 17.♔f2±

White keeps a nice edge.

## C) 8...e6

The idea to play ...d5 and try to hold the IQP position has become fairly popular, and comes in different forms. I must admit that the bishop on g7 is quite well placed for such situations. At the same time, Black's position remains rather passive, so it may not suit a lot of players.

## 9.0-0

9.f4 might seem tempting to prevent ...d5, but Black is doing well after 9...d6! intending ...e5.

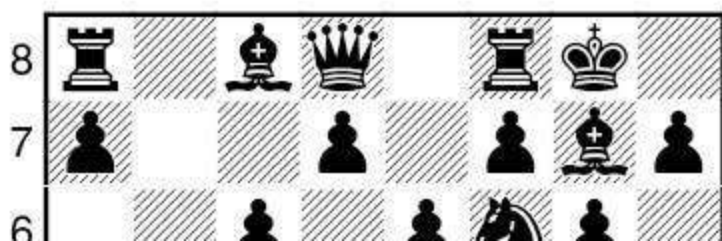
Another critical continuation is:

## 9.♘xc6!? bxc6

9...dxc6 10.0-0 might be holdable for Black, but it seems to me like a pleasant position to play for White. 10...e5 (10...♔xd1 11.♖fxd1±; 10...♔e7 can be met by 11.f4± or 11.♙g5!?±) 11.♔xd8 ♖xd8 12.♖fd1 ♖e8 13.f3 ♘d7 14.♖d2 ♘f8 15.♘a4 ♙f6 16.♘c5 ♔g7 17.a4 ♖d8 18.♖xd8 ♙xd8 19.♔f2 ♙c7 20.a5 ♔f6 21.♙c4 ♘d7 22.♘d3± Guerrero Vargas – Argandona Riveiro, Linares 2014.

## 10.♙c5

It seems to me that Black's most challenging continuation is:



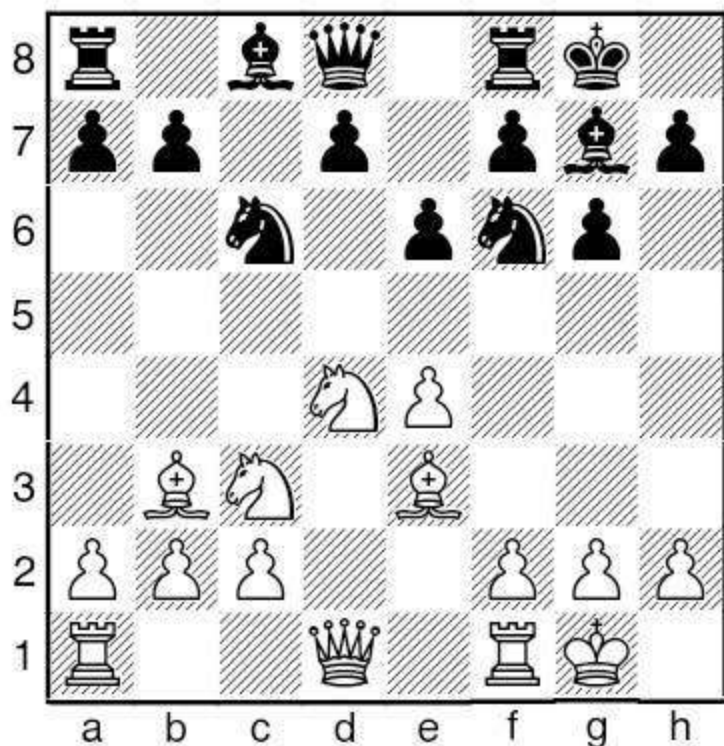


10...♙a6!?!N

It's hard to assess what is happening after 10...♖e8 11.♙d6 ♙a6 (11...♘d5 12.exd5 exd5† 13.♚f1±) 12.♙f3 ♘d5 13.e5 (or 13.0-0-0!?), but Black's position seems to be on the edge.

11.♙xf8 ♚xf8 12.♙d2 d5

White is a full exchange up, but Black has excellent compensation.



9...d5 10.exd5 exd5

Black has also tried:

10...♘xd5 11.♘xd5 exd5

This makes less sense to me as the c3-knight was slightly misplaced, whereas the one on f6 had more potential.

12.c3 ♘a5 13.♙d3

13.♙d2!? can also be played, since 13...♘c4 (13...♖e8 14.♙h6 ♙h8 15.♖fe1± is pleasant for us) 14.♙xc4 dxc4 is not such a big deal. In Yuranda – Mazlan, Melaka 2012, 15.♙h6!N± would have led to a classic 'good knight versus bad bishop' scenario.

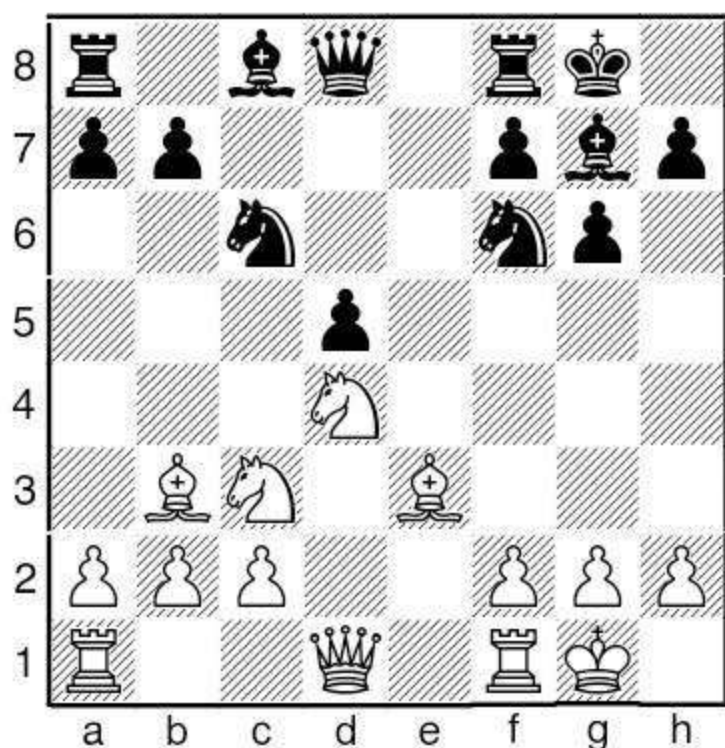


13...♘xb3 14.axb3 a6 15.♔d2 ♖e8

Black had better play this before ♕h6 forces a bishop trade favouring White.

16.♖fe1 ♕d7 17.♘c2 ♖c6 18.♕d4 f6! 19.♖xe8† ♔xe8 20.h3 ♔f7 21.♘b4±

Svidler – Carlsen, Morelia/Linares 2007.



11.♔d2!

An ‘almost novelty’. Most people have, seemingly automatically, spent a tempo preventing ...♘g4, without realizing that it isn’t really a threat. On top of the lost tempo, moving a pawn to h3 or f3 also weakens White’s kingside.

11.f3 creates serious weaknesses, and after 11...♖e8! Black’s set-up is perfectly justified. 12.♔d2 (12.♕f2 a6 13.♔d2 ♘a5) 12...♘a5 13.♕g5 ♔b6 14.♖ad1 ♕e6 15.♘a4 ♔c7= Ozanic – Velimirovic, Vinkovci 1970.

11.h3 ♕e6

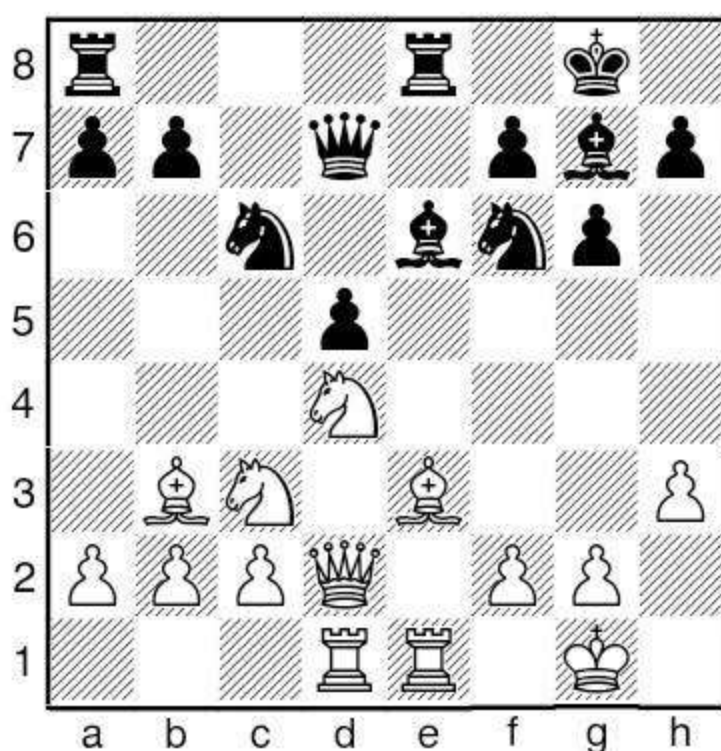
The h3-pawn is not such an obvious weakness, but Black can seriously consider the plan of ...♔d7 and ...♕xh3.



11...♖e8 12.♖e1 ♗e6 13.♔d3 a6 14.♖ad1 ♔d6?! The queen should go to d7, but this game is useful to show some of the ideas and manoeuvres available to us. 15.♗g5 ♗d7 16.♖xe8† ♖xe8 17.♘xc6 ♗xc6 18.♗e3 ♖d8 19.♗d4 ♖d7 20.a3 ♔f4 21.♔e2± Ganguly – Akshat, Goa 2015.

12.♔d2 ♔d7 13.♖ad1 ♖fe8 14.♖fe1?!

White might still be able to claim an edge after 14.♘xe6 fxe6, but he would have had better chances to put pressure on Black's central pawns if he had not spent a tempo on h2-h3.



14...♗xh3! 15.gxh3 ♔xh3 16.♘xc6 ♔g4† 17.♔h2 bxc6 18.♖g1 ♔h5† 19.♔g2 ♖g4 20.♗f4 d4↑

Ruiz – Delgado Ramirez, Praia da Pipa 2014.





## 11...♘e4!?N

This is an obvious try, but it does not solve all Black's problems. If he develops normally then White keeps a nice edge, for instance:

11...♞e8 12.♞ad1 ♘e6 (12...♘a5 13.♙h6 ♙h8 14.♞fe1±; 12...a6 13.♞fe1±) Broekmeulen – Reinderman, Netherlands 2015.

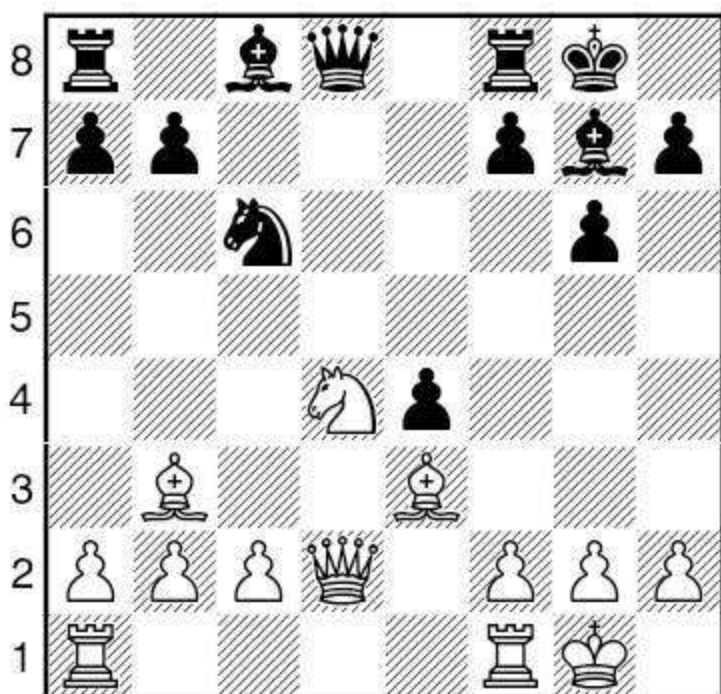
13.♞fe1N 13...♘g4 (13...♚d7 14.f3!?±) 14.♙g5 ♚d6 15.♙f4±

11...♙e6 Chiron – Bouquet, engine game 2013. 12.♞ad1N 12...♚d7 (12...♚d6 13.♞fe1 ♞fe8 14.♘xe6! fxe6 15.♘b5 ♚d7 16.c4±) 13.f3!? Black isn't really in a position to exploit the weaknesses created by this move – and now White can improve his position with ♚f2 etc. 13...♞fe8 14.♞fe1±

11...♘g4 12.♙g5! (12.♘xd5? ♘xe3 13.fxe3 ♘xd4 14.exd4 ♙e6⚡) 12...♚d6 13.♙f4 ♚c5 (13...♙e5 14.♙xe5 ♘cxe5 15.♘cb5 ♚b8 16.g3±) 14.♘f3 Black's pieces are misplaced. 14...♙e6 15.♞ad1 ♞ad8 (15...♙xc3 16.bxc3 is of course too dangerous for Black) White has a pleasant choice between the ambitious 16.♘xd5± and the simple 16.♞fe1±.

## 12.♘xe4 dxe4

Black no longer has an isolated pawn in the centre, but the ensuing endgame is not without weaknesses for him.





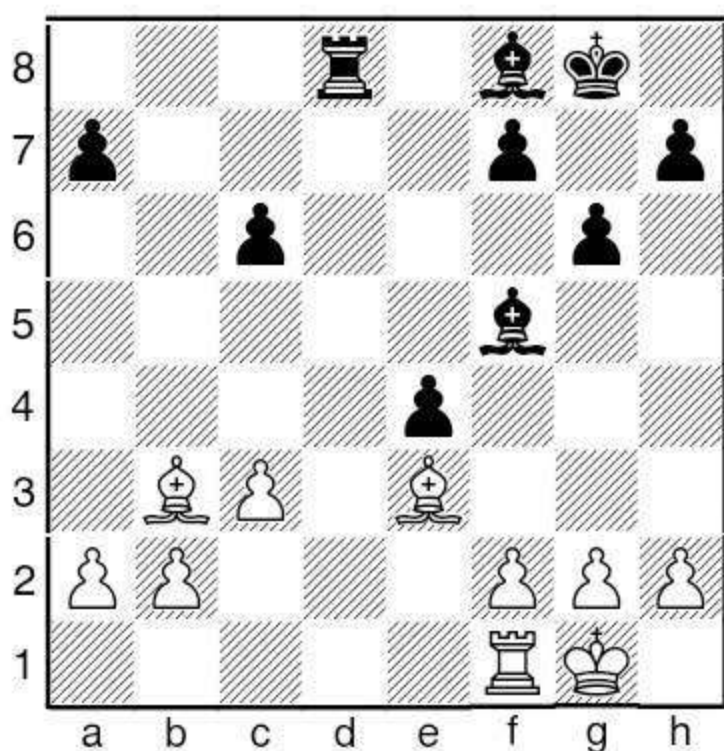
13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♙xd8 ♖xd8 15.♞ad1 ♕f5 16.♞xd8† ♞xd8  
17.c3

Despite the simplifications, White is definitely better. Black's bishops don't have many prospects, while his queenside weaknesses are obvious.

17...♕f8!?

17...♞d7 18.♞d1!? (Keeping the rooks on is fine, but the double-bishop endgame also favours White) 18....♞xd1†  
19.♙xd1 a6 20.♙e2 ♙c8 21.f3 exf3 22.♙xf3 ♙d7 23.♙f2±

17...a6 18.h3 h5 19.♞e1± White can follow up with ♙c4 or ♙a4.



18.♞e1

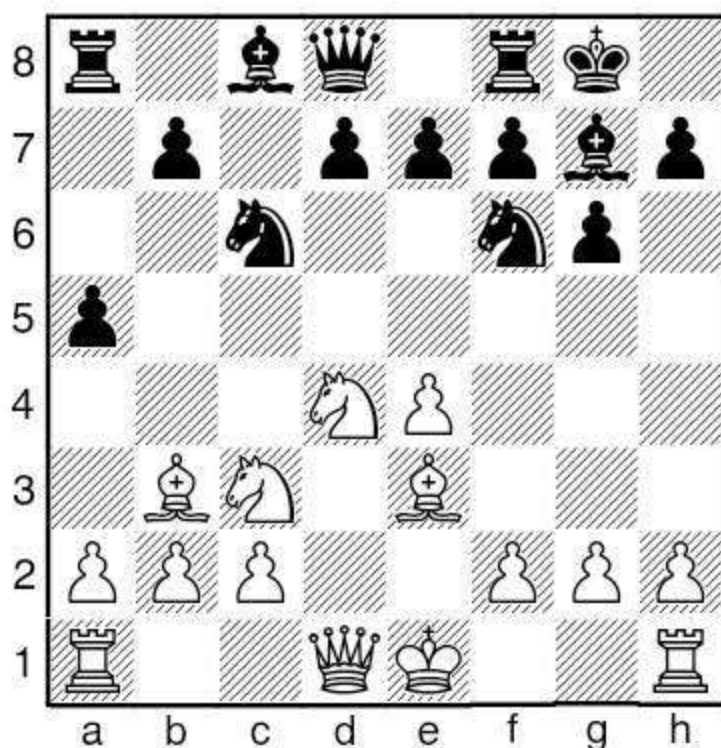
18.h3 h5 does not change a great deal.

18.♙xa7!? ♞d2 gives Black some counterplay. The computer shows that White can get some advantage here too, but we don't have to rely on forcing lines, as we have a stable positional plus.

18...c5 19.h3 h5 20.♙f4

White maintains a pleasant edge.

## D) 8...a5



Even though this has been a hugely popular choice, with more than 3,000 games on the database, I have relegated it to the status of a sideline, because its reputation has taken considerable hits over the years. Nowadays most strong players prefer either a ...d6 set-up or a different scheme involving ...d5.

Nevertheless, we should make an effort to understand what made this line so popular. Indeed, the idea of preparing ...a4 to target White's centre, while keeping the option of playing ...d5 in one move, seems rather appealing. However, most of Black's troubles stem from the weak squares that his last move created on the queenside.

### 9.0-0!

9.a4 ♖g4! 10.♔xg4 ♘xd4 gives Black a considerably improved version of the 8...♘g4 line, as the subsequent exchange on b3 will weaken White's structure.

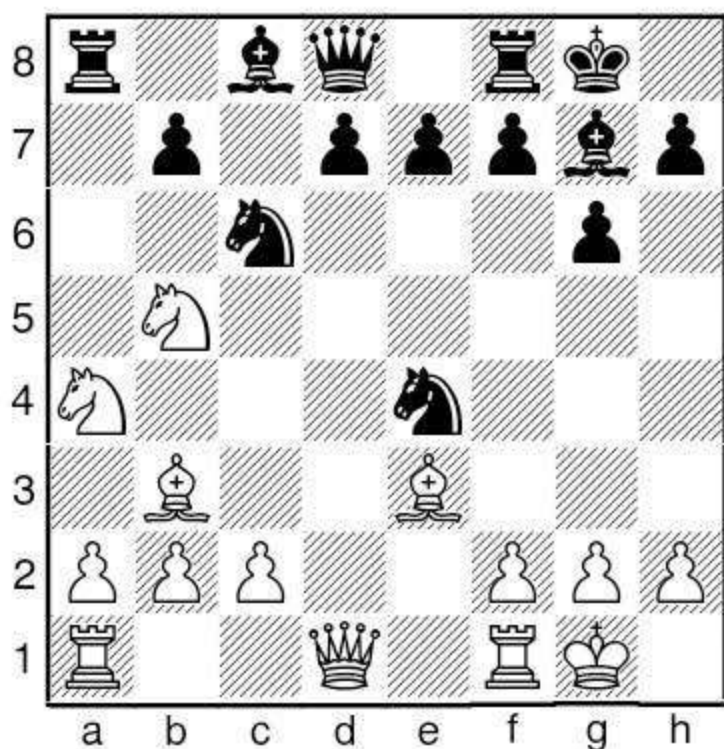
9.f3 d5! is a major theoretical line.

The text move ignores Black's 'threat' to advance the a-pawn. We will analyse D1) 9...a4,



D2) 9...d6 and D3) 9...♘xd4.

D1) 9...a4 10.♘xa4 ♘xe4 11.♘b5!



The key move. White's cluster of minor pieces keeps control of not just the queenside, but also the centre. He can easily improve his position with moves like ♖e2, c2-c4 and ♖d1, followed by either c4-c5 or bringing the a4-knight to d5. Black has a central majority but it is hard for him to advance his pawns without creating weaknesses, so he often ends up struggling due to a lack of activity and limited space.

11...d5!?

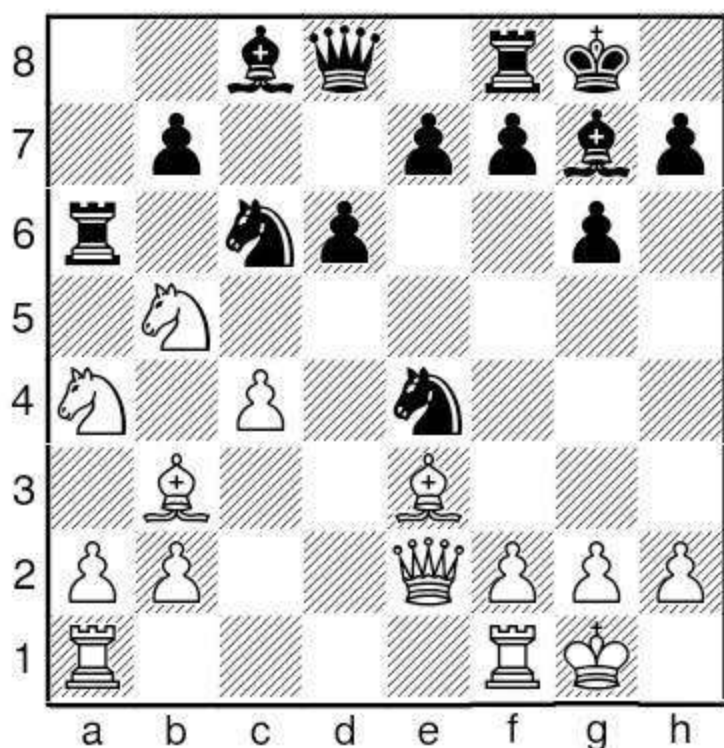
This seems to me like the only real attempt for some activity.

11...♖xa4 12.♙xa4 ♙xb2 13.♖b1 ♙g7 has been played a few times, but Black can hardly claim full compensation for the exchange. A good example for White is:



14.f3 ♔a5 15.♙b3 ♞c3 16.♞xc3 ♔xc3 17.♔e1 ♔e5 18.♔d2 ♞d4 19.♞bd1 ♞f5 20.♙f2 ♔c7 21.♔e2 e5 22.♔c4± Karjakin – Jones, Crete 2007.

11...♞a6 12.♔e2 d6 is more solid, but after 13.c4 you don't need to know 'theory' to play White's position. Just bring the pieces to the centre, and either go for the c4-c5 break or bring the a4-knight to d5. Here are a few brief examples:



13...♞f6 14.♞ad1 (Another game continued 14.♞fd1 b6 15.h3 ♞d7 16.♞ac1 ♙b7 17.♞ac3 ♞c5 18.♙c2 f5 19.f4 ♞a7 20.b4+– Korneev – Gomez, Jakarta 2012) 14...♙g4 15.f3 ♙d7 16.♞ac3 (16.♞fe1±) 16...♞a5 17.♙c2 ♔b8 18.b3 ♞c6 19.♙b1± Zharebukh – Belous, Moscow 2012.

11...d6 12.♔e2! prevents most of Black's tactical tricks and leads to a similar situation as in the previous line. 12...♞f6 (12...♞a6 transposes to 11...♞a6 above) 13.c4 ♙e6 14.♞ad1 ♞d7 (14...♔b8 15.♞b6 ♞a6 16.♞d5 ♞c8 17.a3 ♙xd5 18.cxd5 ♞e5 19.♞c1± Fedorov – Spasov, Plovdiv 2003)







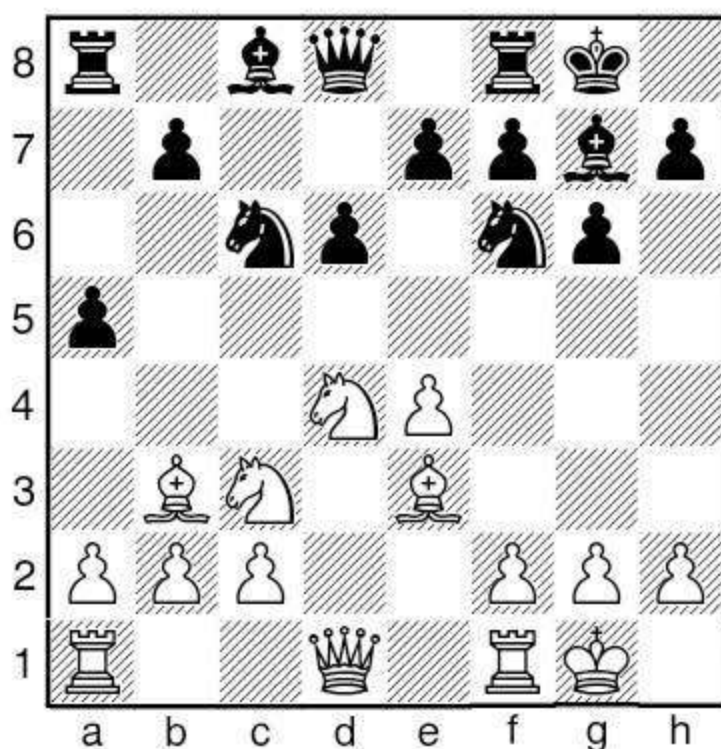
14. ♖c5! N 14... ♔g4 15. ♔xg4 ♙xg4 16. ♖c7! ♜ab8 17. ♖xd5  
 ♙xb2 18. ♜ae1 ♜be8

18... ♙a3 19. h3 ♖c8 (19... ♙f5 20. g4±) 20. hxg4 ♖xb6 21. ♖xb6  
 ♙xc5 22. ♖d7±

**19. a4±**

The endgame is one-sided. White's pieces are dominating while Black's are just hanging around with no coordination.

## D2) 9...d6



In a sense this is the least challenging move, as long as you remember the reply:

**10. ♖db5!**

If Black plays 10... a4 11. ♖xa4 ♖xe4 then we transpose to the note on 11...d6 in variation D1 above. If Black chooses another move, then he risks falling into passivity as White establishes a stranglehold on the queenside.

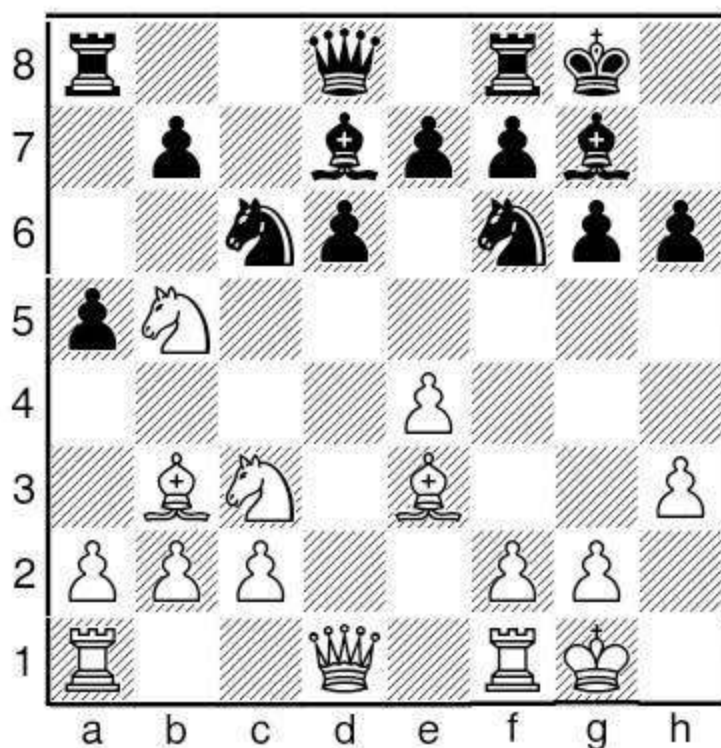
**10...b6**

Preparing ... ♖d7-c5.

10... ♖g4 11. ♙g5 doesn't help Black, as it is not clear where



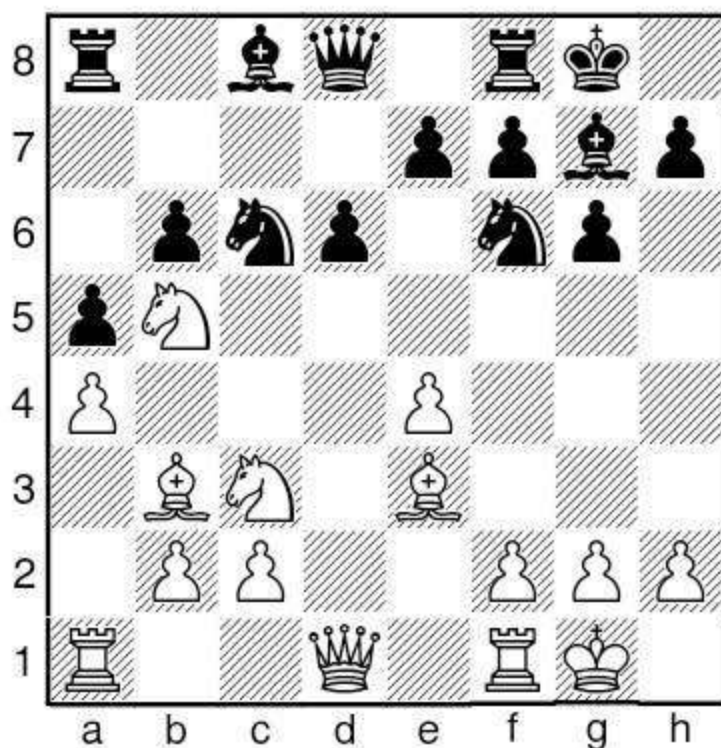
the knight is going next. A game of mine continued: 11...h6  
 12.♔d2 ♔d7 (12...♔h7 13.h3 ♘f6 14.♖e1 ♘d7 15.a4 ♘c5 16.♔c4  
 b6 17.♔e3±) 13.h3 ♘f6 14.♔e3



14...♘b8? An unfortunate regrouping, but Black was worse anyway. 15.a4 ♔c6 16.e5!+– Negi – Senador, Cebu City 2007.

## 11.a4

11.♖e2 has also scored well, but it seems easiest to rule out the ...a4 plan once and for all.





## 11...♙a6

11...♘d7 12.f4 is similar, for instance: 12...♘b4 13.f5 ♘c5 14.♙c4 ♙d7 15.♙g5!→

## 12.f4 ♘d7 13.♙f3

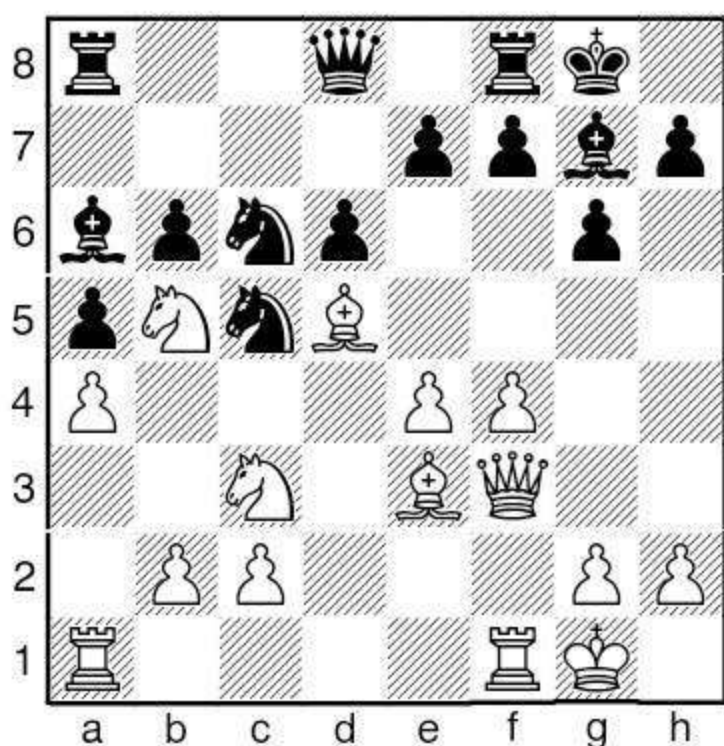
The immediate 13.f5!? is also interesting: 13...♖c8 (13...♘c5? 14.fxg6 hxg6 15.♖xf7 ♖xf7 16.♙xf7† ♔xf7 17.♙d5† wins; 13...♘de5 14.♘d5 ♘d7 15.♘f4!? gives White a promising initiative) This position has occurred in a few games; after 14.♙g4!?N 14...♘ce5 15.♙h4↑ I like White's chances on the kingside.

## 13...♘c5

13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♘a7 was played in Zhang Zhong – Malakhov, Poikovsky 2004, and now the blunt 15.f5!N would have been strong.

## 14.♙d5!?

14.e5 has been played in several games, but I like the f4-f5 plan even more.



## 14...♙d7

14...♖c8 was played in Pasierb – B. Benko, email 2006,

when 15.f5! ♖e5

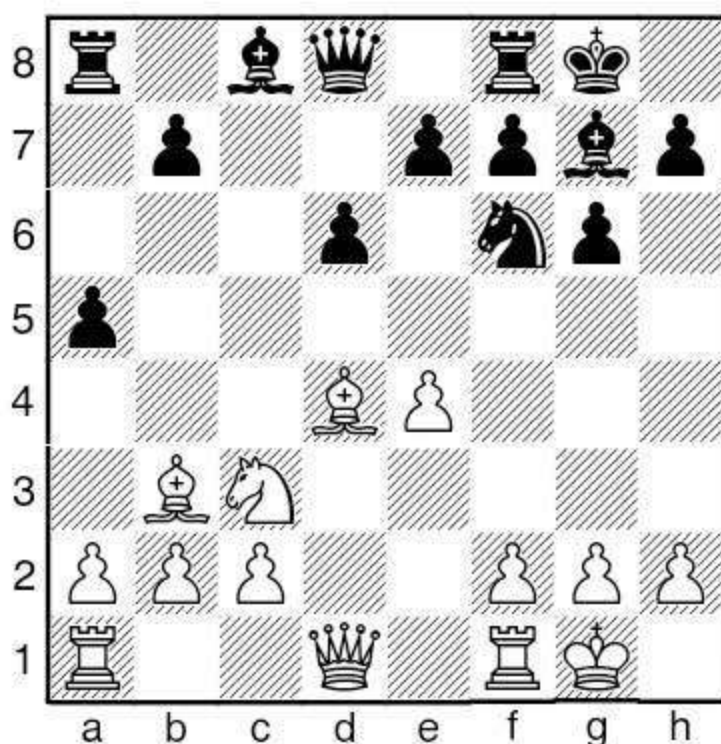
### 15.f5! ♖e5

15...♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♖e5 17.♔h3 ♖xa4 18.c4= gives White excellent attacking chances for a mere pawn.

### 16.♔h3 ♖ac8 17.b3±

White can strengthen his position with ♖ad1 and ♙d4 before pressing ahead on the kingside.

### D3) 9...♘xd4 10.♙xd4 d6



This is probably the most sensible option. Generally we are trying to avoid short castling, but here Black has forced us to do it. Should he be proud of that? Not just yet, because Black has made a serious concession with ...a5, which weakens some squares and renders his position less flexible. The knight exchange on d4 also takes away the options of ...♘a5xb3 and ...♘e5-c4.

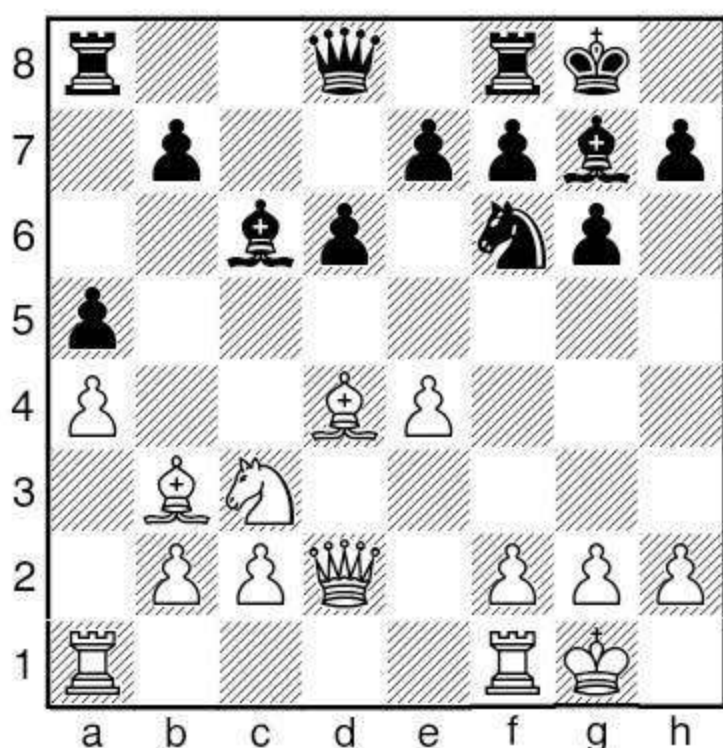
It is worth considering both **D31) 11.a4 ♙d7 12.♔d2!?**

### D31) 11.a4 ♙d7 12.♔d2!?



In most games White has gone for some combination of ♖fe1 and ♞d5, hoping for eventual pressure along the e-file. However, I find it more appealing to go for ♖ae1, perhaps followed by f4-f5 if Black sits and waits. This way the f1-rook can be put to use while the one on e1 can be lifted to the kingside via e3 when the time is right.

## 12...♞c6



## 13.♖ae1!?N

Continuing with the plan outlined above. I was inspired to try this after seeing a game between Rowson and Motwani in which White played the same plan. In that game White had already played f2-f3, so here I want to try and save a tempo. Of course the downside is the possibility of ...e5 as analysed below.

## 13...e5

Winning the e4-pawn. I considered a few other moves:

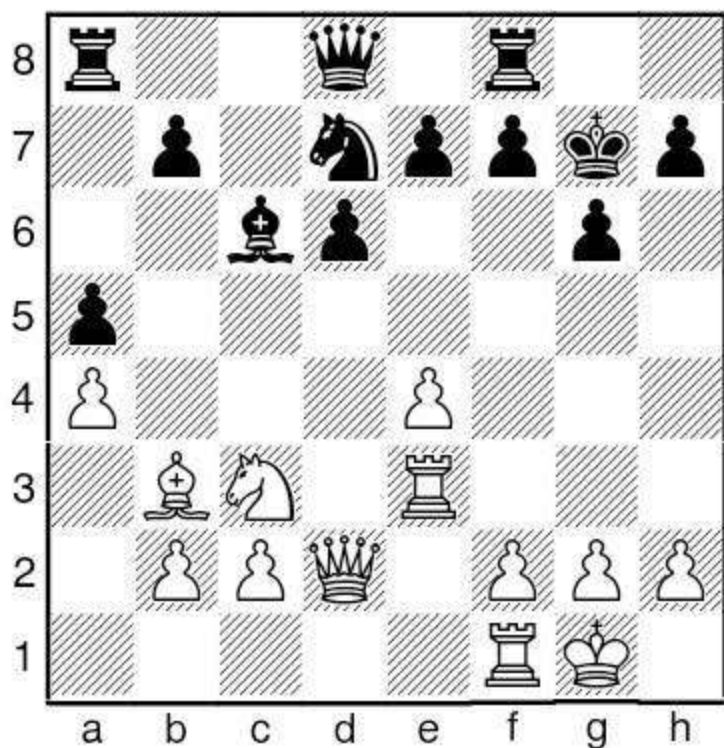
13...e6 14.f4 e5 15.fxe5 (15.♞e3!? ♞xe4 16.♞xe4 ♞xe4 17.fxe5 is interesting but not necessary) 15...dxe5 16.♞e3 White is better.



13...♖c8 14.f4!? e5 (14...e6 15.f5↑) 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♙e3 ♔xd2  
 17.♙xd2 Black faces a difficult endgame with pawn  
 weaknesses on a5 and f7, for instance: 17...♖fd8 18.♙e3 ♖d6  
 19.♙c5 ♖d7 20.♙b6±

13...♘d7 14.♙xg7 ♔xg7 15.♖e3!

15.f4 ♔b6† 16.♔h1 ♘c5 is more complicated because  
 Black is winning a pawn on b3, and we don't need to  
 allow even this much counterplay.



15...♘c5 16.♖h3 h5 17.♖xh5!?

A promising sacrifice, although it is certainly not the  
 only route to an advantage.

The simple 17.♙d5± is pleasant for White, who can  
 slowly build his position with the aim of exploiting  
 the h5-weakness.

17...gxf5 18.♔g5† ♔h8 19.♔xf5† ♔g7 20.♔g5†

20.♔g4† ♔h6! (20...♔h7? allows 21.♖e1!+– since ...♖g8  
 isn't possible) 21.♖e1 e6 22.♖e3 ♔g5 White has no  
 more than a draw.

20...♔h7 21.♔f5† ♔g7



22.f4! ♖xe4

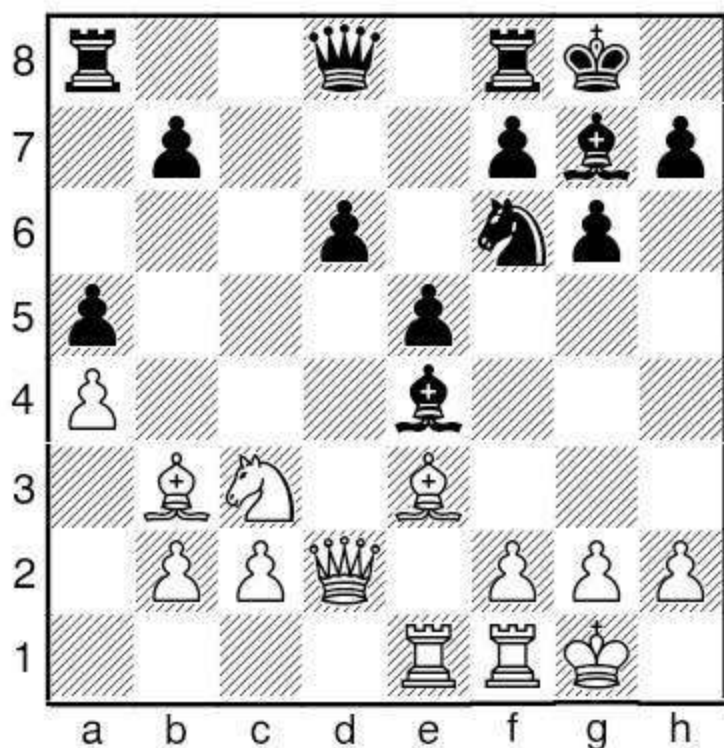
22...e6? 23.♔g4† ♔h7 24.♖f3 is hopeless for Black.

23.♘xe4 ♞xe4 24.♔xe4↑

White has a pawn for the exchange plus an ongoing attack.

14.♖e3 ♖xe4

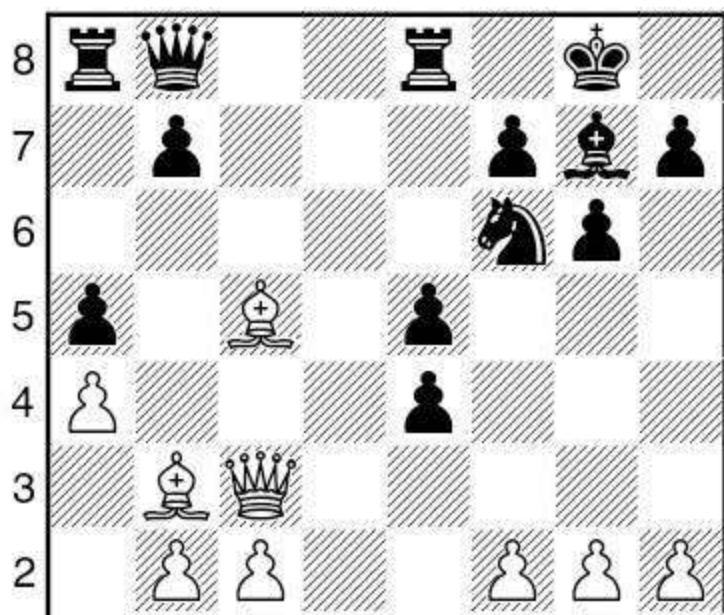
14...♞xe4?? loses a piece after 15.♘xe4 ♖xe4 16.♖g5.



15.♖d1! ♖c6

15...d5? runs into a tactic: 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♔c3 ♔b8

18.♖c5 ♖e8





19. ♖xf7† ♔xf7 20. ♕b3† ♖e6 21. ♖d6 ♕c8 22. ♖xe6 ♕xe6  
 23. ♕xb7† ♘d7 24. ♕xa8 ♘xc5 25. ♕xa5 White is winning.

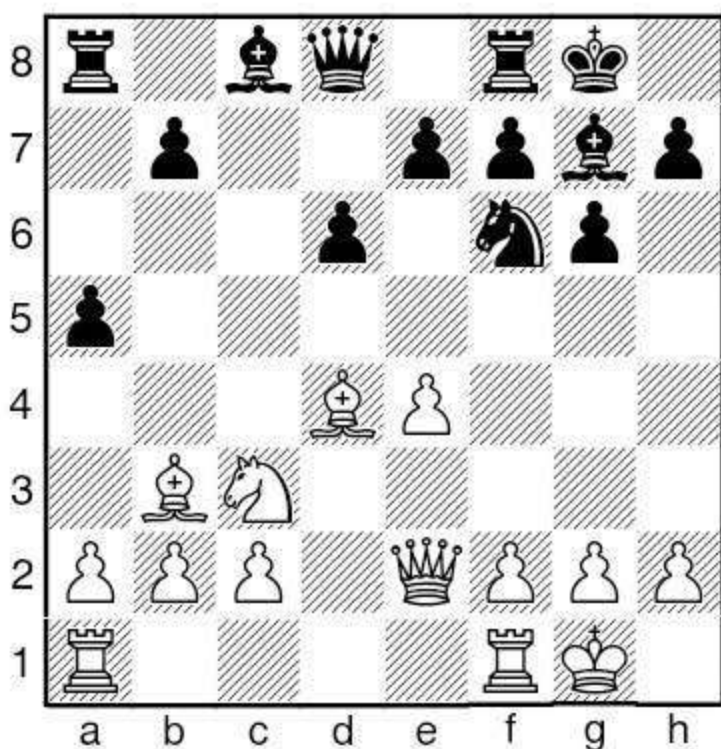
16. ♕xd6 ♕xd6 17. ♖xd6 ♖fd8

17...e4 18. ♖fd1 ♘g4 19. ♖f4± does not change much.

18. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 19. ♖b6 ♖a8 20. ♖d1±

White has a pleasant endgame.

### D32) 11. ♕e2!?



This is a completely different approach. Instead of preventing ...a4, White provokes it in the hope that the pawn will later become weak. In this line we will generally look to play in the centre and queenside rather than go for a kingside attack.

11... ♖d7

When I tested this line my opponent went for 11... ♖g4 12.f3 ♖d7, but I am not convinced that provoking f2-f3 is much of an achievement for Black. 13. ♖ad1 a4 14. ♖c4 ♖c6 15.a3 ♘d7 16. ♕f2 ♖xd4 17. ♕xd4





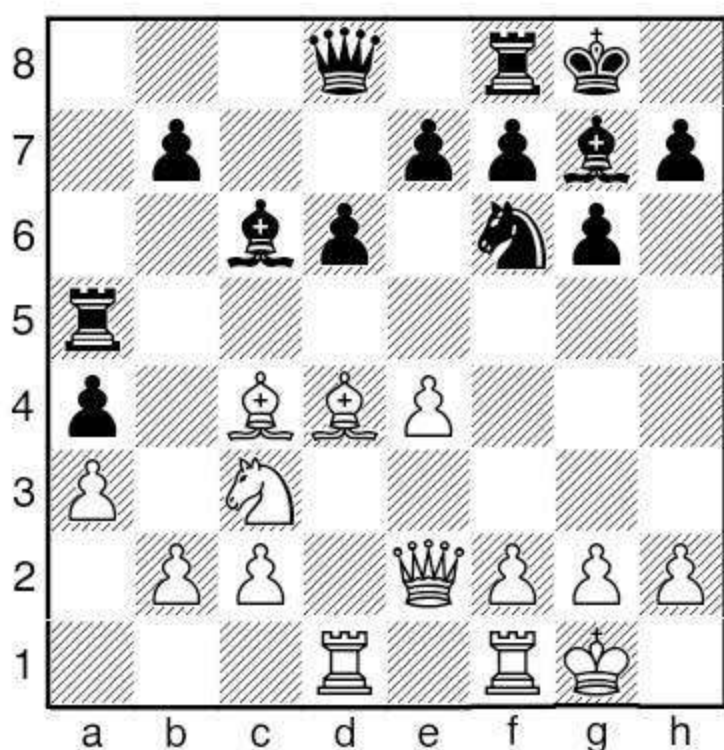
17...♔a5 (After 17...♔b6 18.♔xb6 ♖xb6 19.♕e2± Black's queenside pawns are weak and White is ready to increase the pressure with ♖d4-b4) 18.♘d5± At this point my opponent touched the e-pawn, planning to play 18...e6??. After noticing the mate in one he had no choice but to play 18...e5, which led to the loss of a pawn and eventually the game for him in Negi – Bajarani, Dubai 2008.

**12.♖ad1 a4 13.♕c4 ♕c6**

13...♖c8 14.e5 dxe5 15.♕xe5± is pleasant for us.

So far nobody has tried 13...a3 14.b3, probably because the pawn is harder to defend on a3. The continuation might be: 14...♘g4 15.♕xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕b5 ♖c8 17.♕xd7 ♔xd7 18.♘d5±

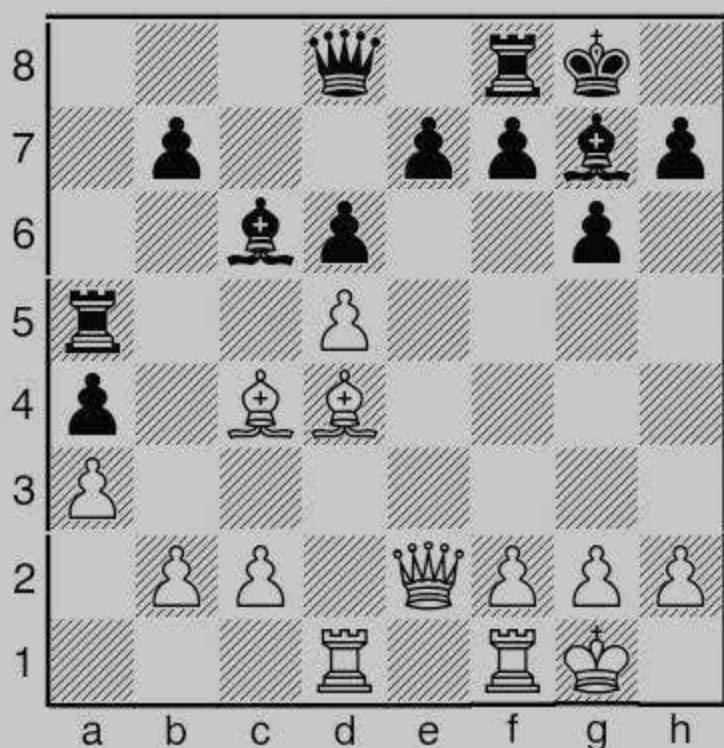
**14.a3 ♖a5**



**15.♔e3!N**

15.♘d5 led to success for White in a high-level game, but Black can improve with: 15...♘xd5!N (15...♕xd5?! 16.exd5 ♘d7 17.♕b5 ♘c5 18.♕xg7 ♔xg7 19.b4 axb3 20.cxb3 ♖a8 21.b4 ♘a6 22.a4 ♔g8 23.♖d4 ♘c7 24.a5±; 15...♘d7 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.c3

e6 18. ♖b4!± gave White a pleasant position in Radjabov – Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2007.) 16. exd5



16... ♗xd5! 17. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 18. ♗b6 ♕xb6 19. ♖xd5 ♗xb2 20. ♕xe7 ♗xa3 21. ♕d7 ♕a7 Black is fine.

### 15... ♖g4

15... ♖d7 16. ♗xg7 ♕xg7 17. ♕d4† ♖g8 18. ♖fe1 White is playing against the weakened queenside pawns, so endgames are welcome. 18... ♕b6 19. ♕xb6 ♖xb6 20. ♗a2±

### 16. ♕d2 ♗xd4

16... e5 17. ♗e3 ♖xe3 18. fxe3!± leaves Black under pressure.

### 17. ♕xd4 ♖e5 18. ♗e2 ♖d7 19. ♕b4

19. ♖fe1 ♕b6 20. ♕xb6 ♖xb6 21. ♖d4± is also good.

### 19... ♕b6 20. ♖d4±

All of these lines after 11. ♕e2 have a common theme: White is happy to swap queens and play against Black's queenside weaknesses, mainly targeting the a4-pawn and often finding the b4-square to be a perfect outpost for one of his pieces.



## 16. ♔d2 ♙xd4

16...e5 17. ♙e3 ♘xe3 18. fxe3!?± leaves Black under pressure.

## 17. ♔xd4 ♘e5 18. ♙e2 ♘d7 19. ♔b4

19. ♖fe1 ♔b6 20. ♔xb6 ♘xb6 21. ♖d4± is also good.

## 19... ♔b6 20. ♖d4±

All of these lines after 11. ♔e2 have a common theme: White is happy to swap queens and play against Black's queenside weaknesses, mainly targeting the a4-pawn and often finding the b4-square to be a perfect outpost for one of his pieces.

## Conclusion

The idea of playing ...d5 in one move is one of the prevailing themes of the Accelerated Dragon, and we encountered a few versions of it in this chapter: both 8...d5!? and 8...e6 demand careful play from White.

The most popular of the main options examined in this chapter was 8...a5, when 9.0-0 gives Black a choice. 9...a4 is positionally dubious while 9...d6 enables White to get a queenside bind with 10. ♘db5!.

This leaves 9... ♘xd4 10. ♙xd4 d6 as the most solid continuation, when White has at least two promising paths.

11.a4 blocks the queenside, after which I favour a set-up with ♔d2 and ♖ae1. If Black allows f4-f5 then he will be subjected to a strong attack, and if he counters with ...e5 we will get a favourable endgame.

Our second option is 11. ♔e2!?, inviting Black's a-pawn to advance, with a view to exploiting the holes on the queenside later in the game. Black's position is playable, but White has good squares for his pieces and generally seems to be in control of the game.



# Chapter 8

## Accelerated Dragon



8...♖e8!?

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0  
8.♙b3

8...♖e8!?

A) 9.♘xc6

B) 9.h4!?

B1) 9...e6

B2) 9...d5!?N

B21) 10.♘xc6

B22) 10.exd5

A) after 10...♗xd8



11.a4!N

B1) after 9...e6



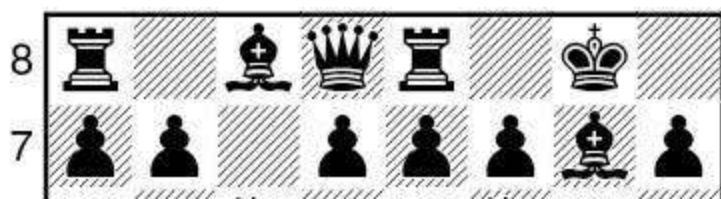
10.h5N

B2)



9...d5?N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3 ♖e8!?



This rook move is incredibly subtle, which is why it has almost exclusively been played by really strong players. It might seem weird to devote a whole chapter to a move which has been played barely a dozen times, but Black's sophisticated set-up presents real challenges and I expect its popularity to increase considerably. In most other variations the main theory has been well established, but the present chapter will be mostly original analysis.

To understand the ideas behind Black's last move, you should first think back to the 8...e6 variation, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Play generally continues 9.0-0 d5, when White will play against the isolated d5-pawn – ideally without weakening his kingside at all, and certainly striving to do without f2-f3.

By placing the rook on e8 first, Black prepares to meet the f2-f3 set-up with ...e6 followed by ...d5, which gives him a favourable version of 8...e6 from the previous chapter, as f2-f3 will be a huge concession in the ensuing IQP position while the rook on e8 will be perfectly placed. If White anticipates the ...e6/...d5 plan by castling short, then Black will just play ...d6 with a typical Dragon position. True, the ...♖e8 move is slightly premature, but Black has avoided the Yugoslav Attack and his position remains fundamentally sound.

It is worth considering **A) 9.♗xc6**, playing for a small edge with little risk. However, I have devoted most of the chapter to **B) 9.h4!?**, an ambitious move which is almost completely new at the time of writing.

Black's strategy works to perfection after:

9.f3 e6!

There is no way to prevent ...d5, after which Black gets an ideal version of the IQP structure.

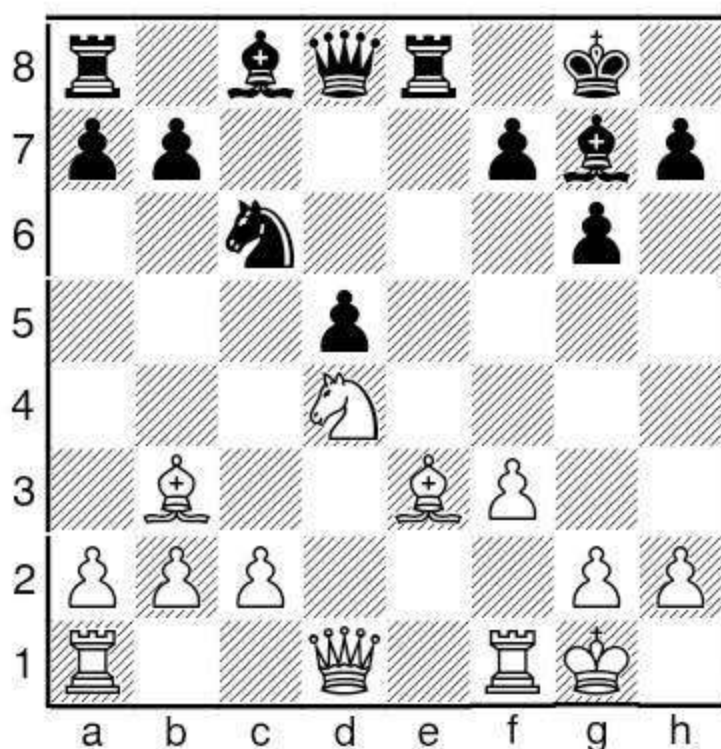
10.0-0

10.♔d2 is pointless because White will not have time for long castling: 10...d5 11.exd5 ♖xd5 12.♕xd5 ♗xd4!



13.♙xd4?! From this position 13...exd5† would be okay for Black since the king would be forced to f1, but the intermezzo 13...♚h4† is even stronger.

10...d5 11.exd5 ♞xd5 12.♞xd5 exd5

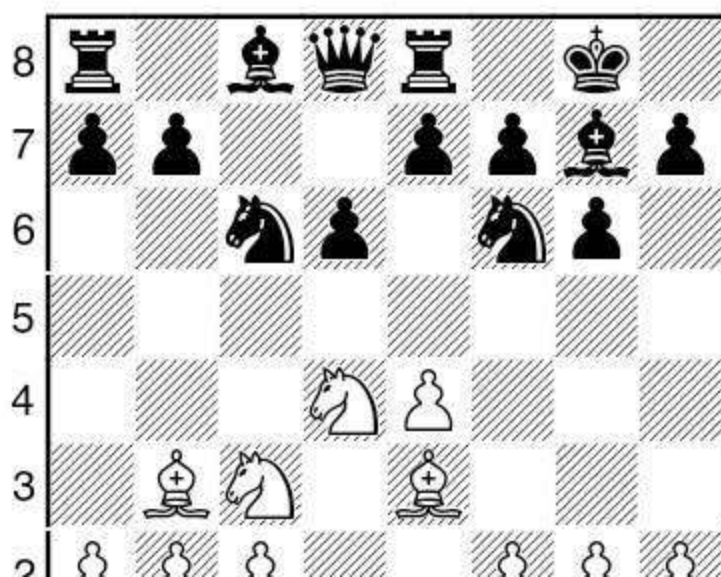


Black has a dream version of the IQP structure. A high-level game continued:

13.♙f2 ♚g5 14.♚h1 ♚h5 15.c3 ♙e5 16.♙g1 ♞xd4 17.cxd4 ♙f4=

Leko – Vitiugov, Bilbao 2014. An impressive opening outcome against Leko, and a perfect demonstration of Black's chances.

A more serious alternative is:  
9.0-0 d6





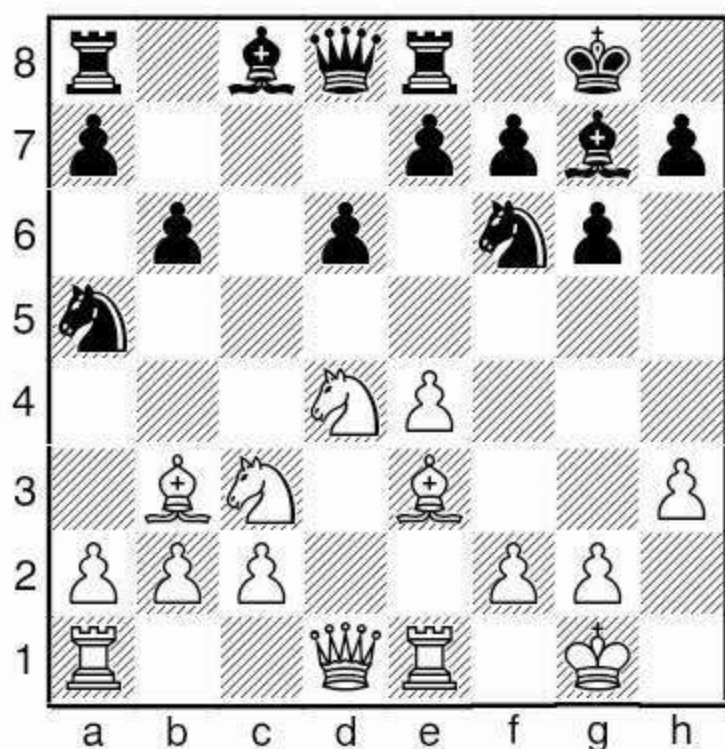
Black's rook has gone to e8 somewhat prematurely, but it does not affect him too much. In fact there are a surprising number of lines where the rook ends up well placed on that square. Of course it is possible to explore this position more deeply – who knows, maybe there is some way to target the f7-pawn, but it's certainly not an easy job. Here are a few lines showing how Black may get a satisfactory game.

10.h3 ♖a5!? 11.♖e1

11.f4 b6 Black can simply ignore the e5 ideas for now.

11.♔e2 b6 12.♖fd1 ♖xb3 13.axb3 ♗b7= Feher – Georgiadis, Porto Rio 2014.

11...b6



Usually in such positions White goes for a plan involving ♗g5 and ♘d5, but this allows Black to make good use of the rook on e8:

12.♗g5 ♖xb3 13.axb3 ♗b7

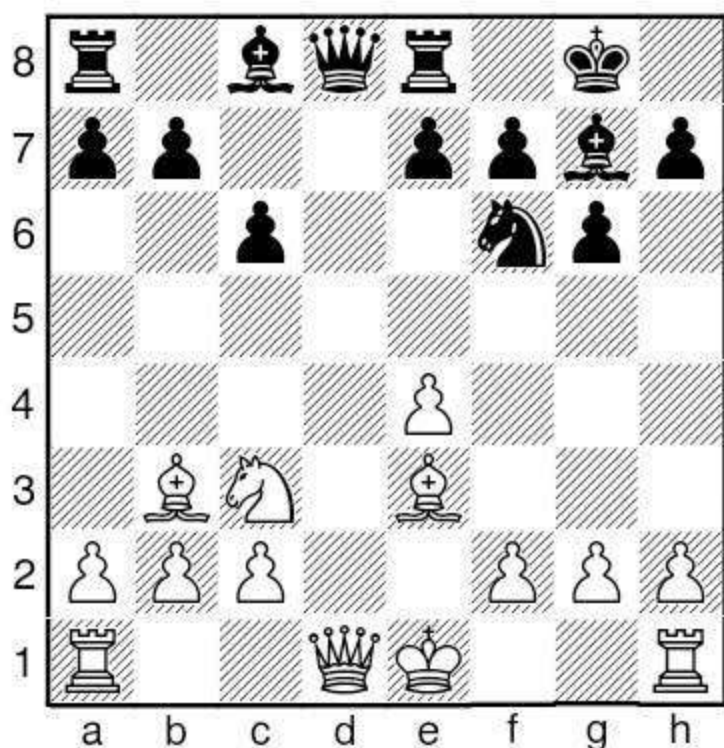
We have transposed to a position more commonly reached after 8...d6 9.h3 ♖a5 10.0-0 b6 11.♖e1 ♗b7 12.♗g5 ♖xb3 13.axb3 ♖e8, from which Black has scored well. A sensible continuation is:

14.♔d3 a6 15.♖e2 h6 16.♙h4 ♘h5=

N. Mamedov – R. Mamedov, Baku 2008.

### A) 9.♘xc6 dxc6

9...bxc6? 10.e5 is no good for Black, so he must settle for a symmetrical structure.



### 10.♔xd8

10.0-0N is playable, although Black seems to be alright after 10...♔c7 or 10...b5.

### 10...♖xd8 11.a4!N

So far 9.♘xc6 has only been tested in one game, which continued: 11.f3 b6 (11...♘e8!?N 12.a4 ♘c7 followed by ...♙e6 looks equal) 12.♔f2 (In the event of 12.a4 Black has time for 12...♙a6 13.a5 ♘d7 intending ...♘c5) 12...♙a6 13.♖hd1 ♘d7 14.h3 (14.a4 ♘c5=) 14...♔f8= Vavulin – Zvjaginsev, St Petersburg 2013.

The text move is a slight improvement as White can do without f2-f3 for the time being.

### 11...♘e8!



Not an obvious move, but it seems to be the most accurate.

After 11...b6 12.a5 Black does not have time to arrange ...♙a6 and ...♘d7, so his life is not so easy. 12...♙b7 (12...b5 13.f3±) 13.f3 ♘d7 14.♔f2 ♘c5 15.♙c4 ♙d4 16.♖hd1 ♙xe3† 17.♔xe3±

11...♘g4 12.♙g5! ♙f6

Other moves fall short of equality:

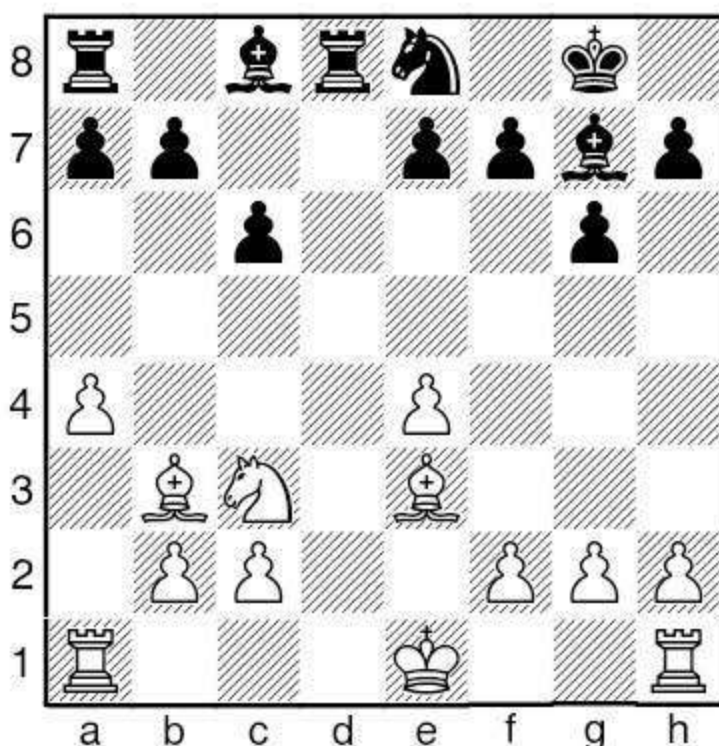
12...♔f8 13.a5 h6 14.♙c1±

12...♙d4 is a dodgy idea because we can force Black to take on f2: 13.h3! ♘xf2 14.♖f1 ♙xc3† 15.bxc3 ♘xe4 16.♙xe7 ♖d5 17.♙xd5 cxd5 18.♙f6±

12...h6 should also be checked, but after 13.♙xe7 ♖e8 14.♙a3 ♙xc3† 15.bxc3 ♖xe4† 16.♔f1 ♖e8 17.f3 ♘f6 18.♔f2 ♙e6 19.♖ad1± White's dark-squared bishop is strong.

13.♙xf6 ♘xf6 14.f3

I'm not sure if White can claim a real advantage, but he certainly has the more comfortable side of equality. The bishop exchange has left White's king with an ideal square on e3, while Black still has to solve the problem of the c8-bishop.



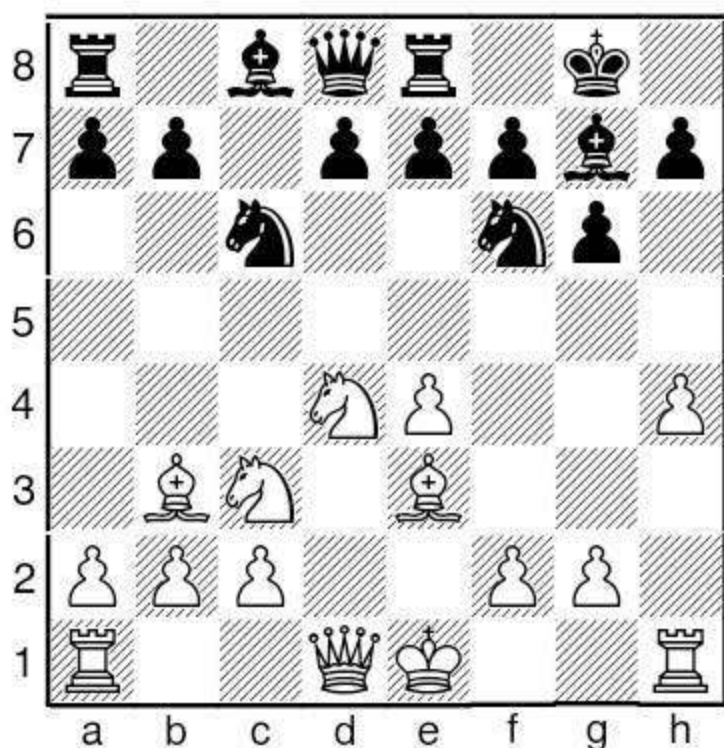


## 12.f3 ♘c7=

There is no need for Black to weaken himself with 12...♖e6?! 13.♖xe6 fxe6 14.♖d2 ♘d6 15.b3±.

After the text move Black is ready to exchange his only bad piece with ...♖e6, after which he shouldn't have much trouble equalizing.

## B) 9.h4!?



The only drawback of ...♖e8 that I could think of is that it's a little slow – so to try and exploit that, we can get straight to business on the kingside. I analysed this as a novelty but it received a practical test just a few months before publication.

I consider Black's two main candidates to be **B1)** 9...e6 and **B2)** 9...d5!?N.

9...d6 makes little sense after 10.f3, because the inclusion of h2-h4 and ...♖e8 obviously favours White in the main lines of the Yugoslav Attack.

9...♘g4?! 10.♙xg4 ♘xd4 seems like a rather pointless

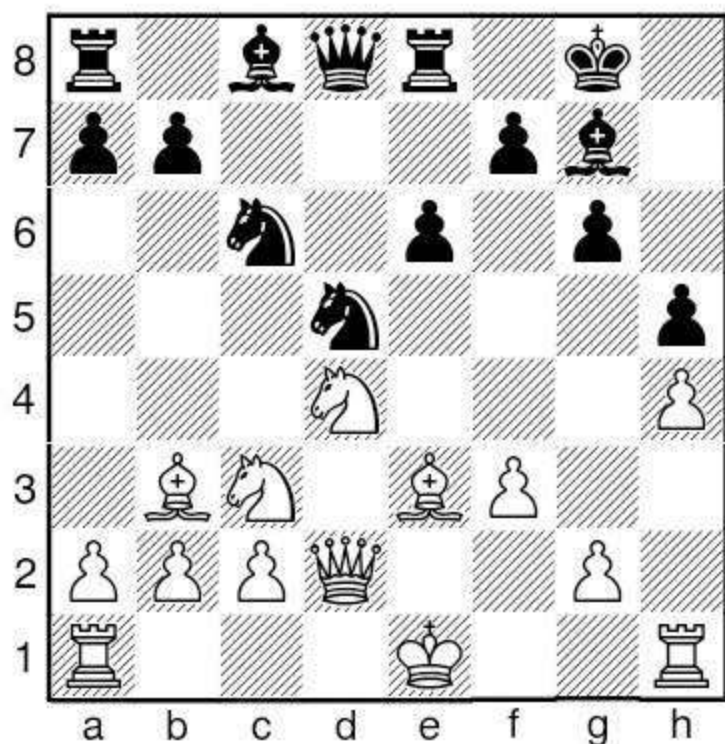
exchanging operation, and after 11.h5! the rook on e8 does not help Black at all.

9...h5

This is obviously a concession from Black, as the g5-square is a gaping hole. More importantly, White has a clever way to exploit the inclusion of the pawn moves.

10.f3! e6 11.♔d2 d5 12.exd5 ♞xd5

After 12...♞xd4 13.♙xd4 exd5† 14.♔f2 the king is quite safe on f2. White can continue improving his position with ♖he1, ♖ad1 and maybe even ♔g1, with good play against the isolated pawn.



13.♞xd5 ♞xd4

13...exd5 can be met by 14.0-0-0 intending an eventual g2-g4, when the drawback of ...h5 is obvious.

14.♙xd4

An important moment: if the moves h2-h4 and ...h5 had not been included, Black could have played ...♔h4† with a winning position!

14...exd5† 15.♔f2±

White's king is safe and he has good prospects against



the IQP.

## B1) 9...e6

Black continues with his original plan and ignores White's kingside play.

### 10.h5N

Another line that deserves attention is:

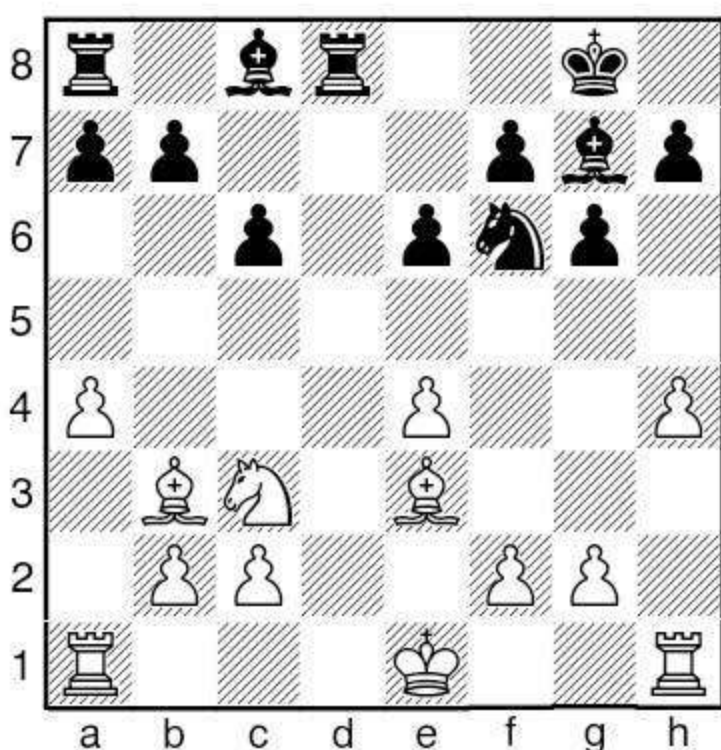
10.♘xc6 dxc6

10...bxc6 11.h5 gives Black two options:

a) The recent game continued 11...d5; I will consider this position below under the move order 10.h5 d5 11.♘xc6 bxc6.

b) 11...♘xh5 gives White the extra option of 12.♙d6!?, aside from 12.♙d2 d5, which is covered below under the 10.h5 move order. While this is fertile ground for exploring, I don't think we need to spend time on it since the main line seems satisfying as well.

11.♙xd8 ♖xd8 12.a4



### 12...b6

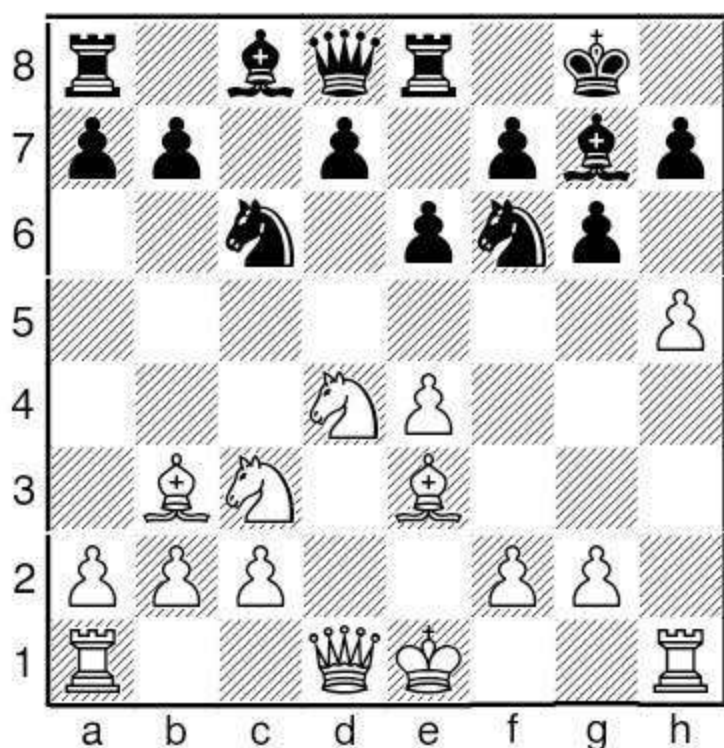
Black's ...e6 is a serious commitment. For one thing,



12...♘g4 runs into 13.♙g5. More importantly, Black does not have the option of ...♘e8-c7 and ...♙e6 to exchange his worst piece.

13.a5 b5 14.f3 ♘d7 15.♙f2±

White has obtained an improved version of variation A.



10...♘xh5!?

10...d5

This seems like a natural move, but we have a nice pawn sacrifice that neutralizes Black's apparent activity.

11.♘xc6 bxc6

We have briefly transposed to the recent game Ruiz Aguilar – Lopez Raygoza, Santa Clara 2015.

12.e5 ♘d7 13.hxg6N

The aforementioned game continued 13.f4 c5 (13...♙b7!?N) 14.♘xd5! with interesting complications, but I found a more dangerous idea.

13...hxg6



14. ♔g4!

Simply abandoning the e-pawn and playing for an attack.

14... ♞xe5

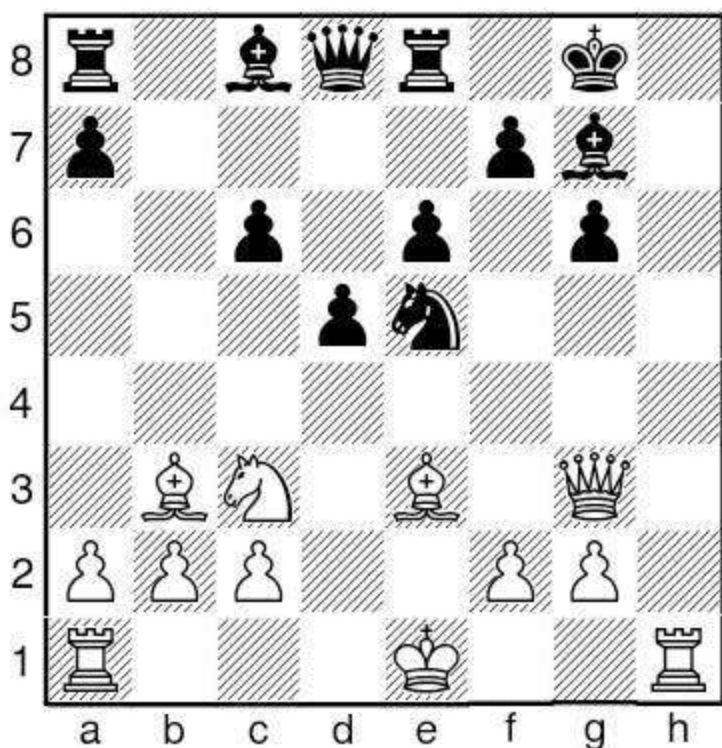
14... ♔c7 15.f4 c5 16.0-0-0 White's attack is coming, and 16...d4 is met by 17. ♞b5.

14... ♙xe5 15.0-0-0 (15. ♙g5!? ♙f6 16. ♔h4 ♙f8! 17.f4 can also be explored) Black might be able to withstand an immediate attack with moves like ... ♙g7 and ... ♞f8, but White can relentlessly build his initiative by slowly bringing his pieces to the kingside. In the meantime, Black does not have much counterplay on the queenside as the bishop on b3 blocks everything. This could be analysed further, but both sides have a lot of options and I am satisfied with my assessment that White has good chances.

15. ♔g3!?

Black's knight is awkwardly placed and will probably have to return to d7 at some point.

15. ♔h3 gives Black the option of 15...f5!?, although this might also prove dangerous for him.





15...a5

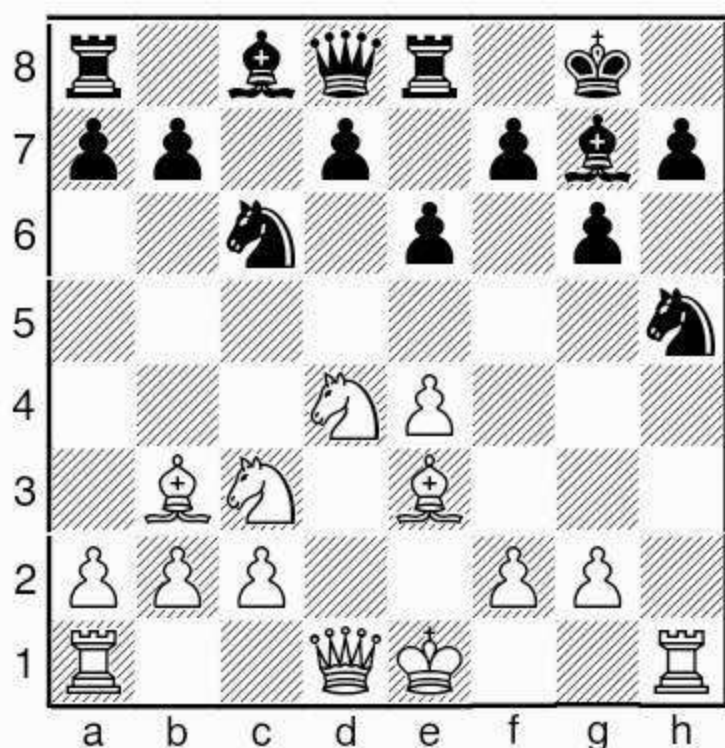
After 15...♙e7 16.0-0-0 ♖b7 17.♖h3± White's attack is gathering steam.

16.0-0-0 ♖a6

16...a4 17.♘xa4± does not achieve much for Black.

17.♙h3

White has dangerous attacking chances.



Returning to the text move, it may appear risky for Black to grab the h-pawn, but these days it's more necessary than ever to consider such moves. Fortunately White has more than one decent way to meet it.

11.♙d2!?

This is the most interesting option, just continuing White's development.

11.g4 is tempting, but Black can defend with 11...♘f4! 12.♙f3 (after 12.♖xf4 ♘xd4 13.e5 ♘xb3 14.axb3 d6! Black is safe) 12...♘xd4 13.♙xf4 ♙f6! when he forces a queen exchange. White compensation should be enough for equality, but not more.

Those who prefer a safe approach can go for 11.♘db5 to

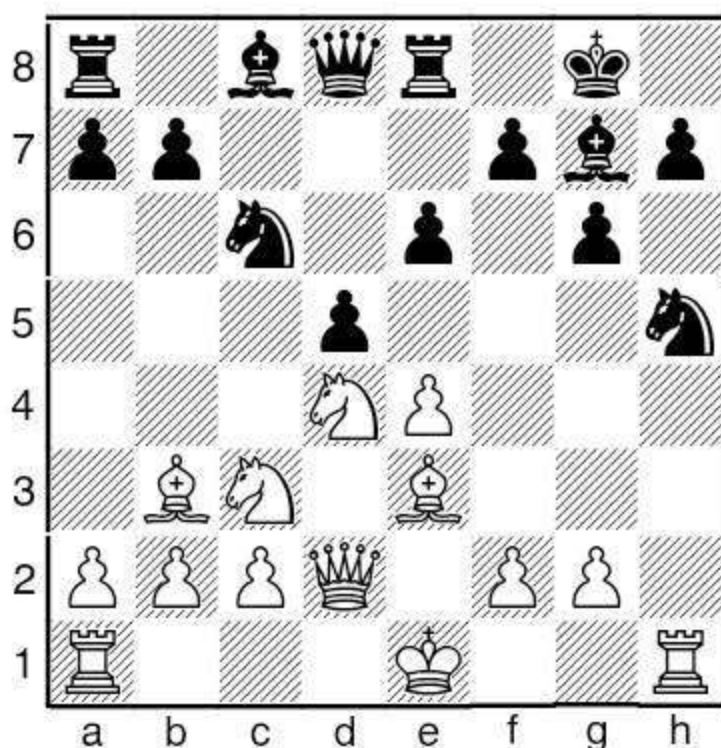


regain the pawn. The position after 11...d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.♔xd5 can be analysed further, but it's clear that White isn't risking much. The computer suggests some rather exotic ideas like 13...♙g4!? and even 13...♙xc3†!?. Perhaps he can find equality somewhere or, more likely, White will continue to press for a slight edge.

## 11...d5

Black had better do something immediately, otherwise White will just build a typical initiative.

11...♞xd4 12.♙xd4 ♙xd4 13.♔xd4 ♔g5 14.e5! looks extremely dangerous for Black.

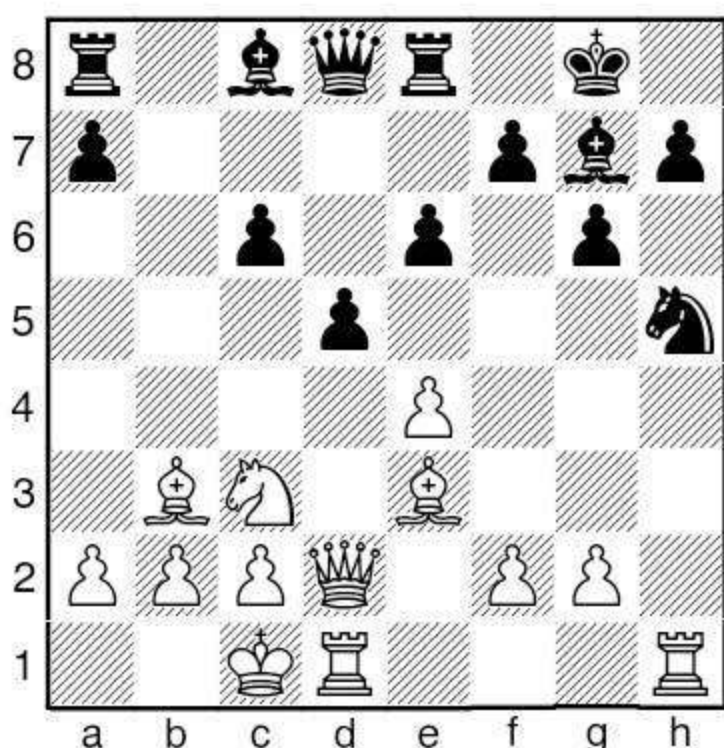


## 12.♞xc6

I also checked: 12.0-0-0 ♞xd4 (after 12...dxe4 13.♞db5 ♔xd2† 14.♔xd2 White maintains some pressure due to Black's awkward rooks) 13.♙xd4 e5 14.♙e3 d4 15.♙g5 ♞f6! My first thought was that this might be dangerous for Black, but the computer convinced me that White doesn't have much. An important point is that 16.♙a4 should be met by the promising sacrifice 16...♙e6!, rather than 16...♔f8 17.♙h6, which looks trickier for Black.

## 12...bxc6 13.0-0-0

Black has a wide choice, but you have to realize that his position is close to collapsing, despite the computer's perennial '0.00' assessments. Although Black's centre seems strong, he can't do much with it. We should also appreciate the value of the bishop on b3: despite looking less than impressive, it does a great job of blocking any counterplay on the queenside.



## 13...♔c7

Any non-forcing moves such as 13...a5 can be met by 14.g4 followed by f2-f3, preventing any immediate counterplay with ...d4 and setting White up for a huge attack along the h-file.

Attempting to clarify the centre with 13...f5? allows 14.exf5 exf5 15.♘xd5! cxd5 16.♙xd5† and White wins.

13...♙e5 is an inexplicable computer move. I just don't get it, and after 14.g4 ♘f6 15.f3♞ I feel White has excellent compensation.

13...♔a5 is a natural move. 14.♙h6!? (A safe approach is 14.♔b1 dxe4 15.♘xe4 ♔xd2 16.♖xd2 ♘f6 17.♘d6♞ when White's excellent pieces and better pawn structure offer

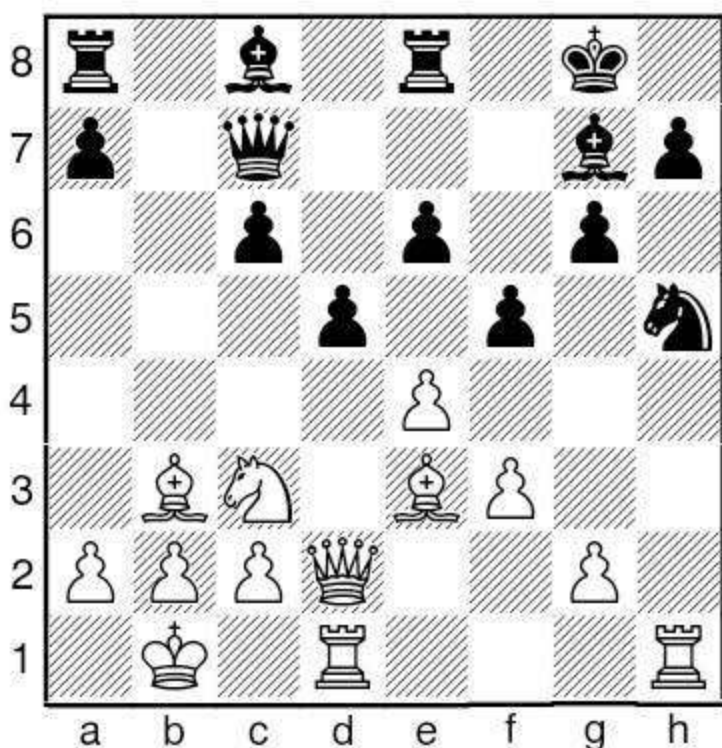


him easy play) Black is forced to play 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 with a double-edged situation. Even though our queenside is shattered, I feel Black's weak dark squares should be even more important. There are too many non-forcing moves to analyse much deeper, but it seems to me that Black is on the brink of disaster.

The text move seems best. Black prevents ♗h6, and sets up the possibility of ...f5, while also preparing to meet g2-g4 in an ingenious way.

## 14.g4

It is worth considering 14.♔b1!? to prevent ...d4. 14...f5!? (14...♘f6 15.f3↑; 14...d4 15.♙xd4 ♖d8 16.♙e3±) 15.f3



We have another tough position to assess. After 15...a5 16.g4 fxg4 17.fxg4 ♘f6 it looks dangerous for Black, but it's hard to prove an advantage against the computer. The right continuation looks to be 18.g5 followed by ♘a4, with full compensation for the pawn.





## 14...d4!

14...♘f6 15.f3 reaches a typical good position for White.

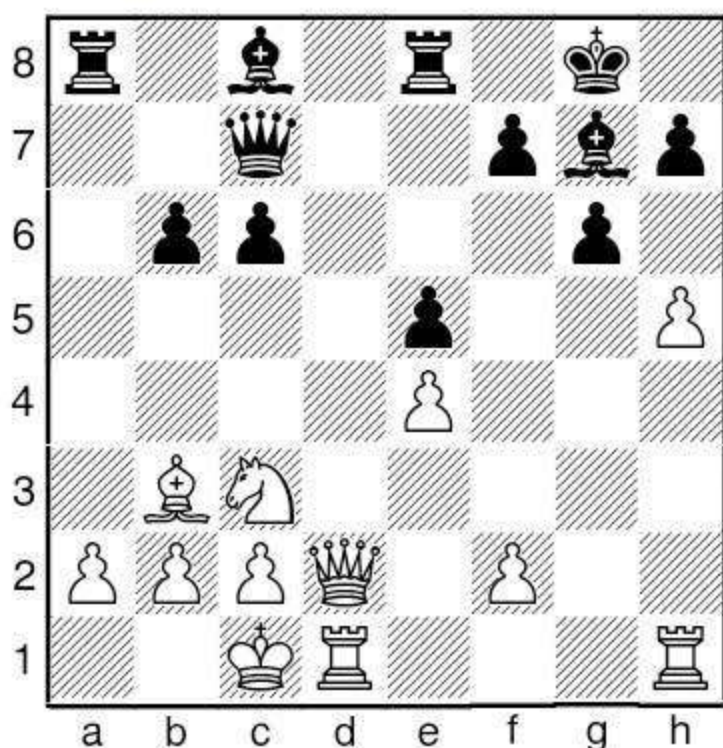
## 15.♙xd4

15.gxh5 dxc3 16.bxc3 ♔a5 is dynamically balanced.

## 15...e5 16.♙b6!?

White can also sacrifice a pawn with 16.♙e3 or 16.♙c5. Certainly the open kingside files offer White a lot of potential, but it will take a lot of analysis to reach a clear assessment.

## 16...axb6 17.gxh5



## 17...♙e6 18.♙xe6 ♖xe6 19.♔b1=

The complications peter out to equality, but we had a lot of interesting options along the way.

## B2) 9...d5!?N



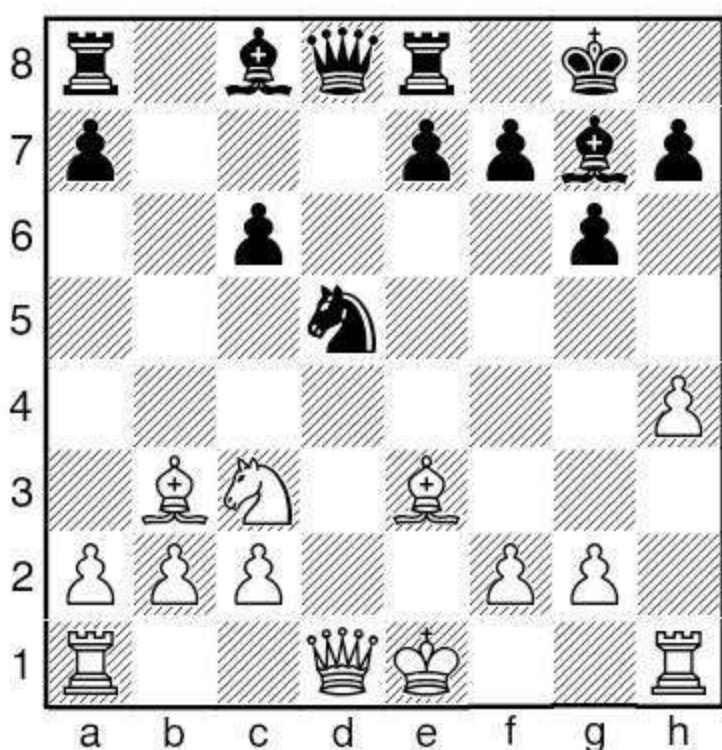
This can be compared with the 8...d5 variation from the previous chapter, but obviously the inclusion of h2-h4 and ...♖e8 will change some things.

It is worth considering two contrasting options. **B21)**

10.♘xc6 is a safe approach, aiming for simplifications, while **B22)** 10.exd5 is the more ambitious try, intending to castle long and make use of the fact that h2-h4 has been played.

### **B21) 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.exd5 ♘xd5!**

11...cxd5 allows White to advance his attack with 12.h5!↑ (he can also transpose to the main line below with 12.♘xd5 if he wishes). This can be analysed more deeply, but it makes sense to focus on the text move which forces our hand.



### **12.♘xd5 cxd5 13.♔xd5**

There is nothing better.

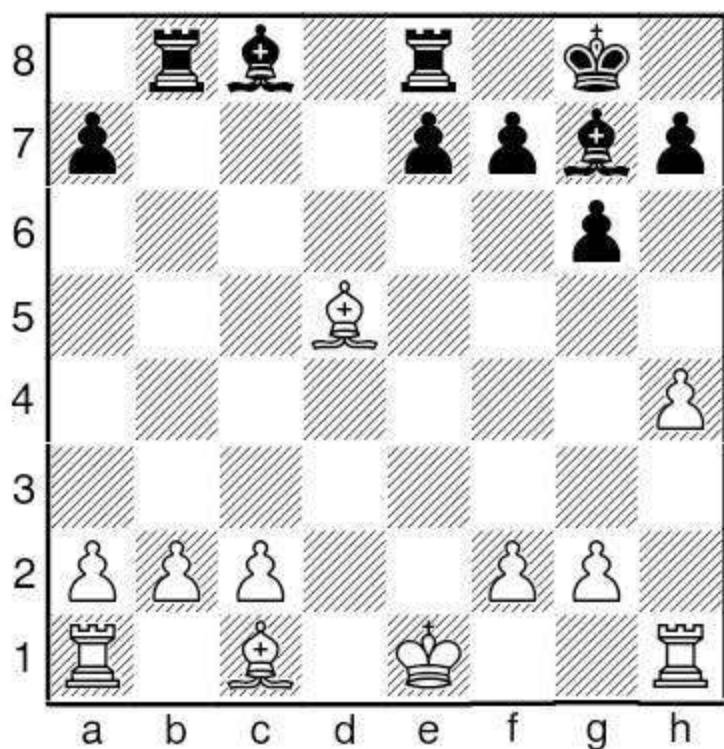
13.c3 runs into 13...♙b7! intending ...d4.

13.h5 ♙xb2! (13...♙a6? 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♔g4±) 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♙d4 ♙xd4 16.♔xd4 e5 and Black is safe.



13...♔xd5 14.♙xd5 ♖b8 15.♙c1!?

15.♖b1 can be met by 15...♙f5! (15...♖xb2 16.♖xb2 ♙xb2 17.♙xa7±) 16.♙b3 a5 17.0-0 ♖ec8 18.♖fc1 when it is hard to see either side being able to do anything. White does have ideas like a2-a4 and ♙d2, but it will be hard to improve his position beyond that.



The text move forces Black to make a critical choice. Once you realize that the rook is not getting trapped on b2, the natural way is of course to take the pawn, but it remains to be seen if the ensuing endgame is completely drawn or if White can continue to press? The other '0.00' lines involve calmly playing a pawn down, which might be fine for a computer, but I don't see any guarantee of getting it back or otherwise achieving definitive equality for Black. Certainly White doesn't have an easy job, but I will present a few lines to show that there are ways White can aim to consolidate his extra pawn.

15...♙xb2

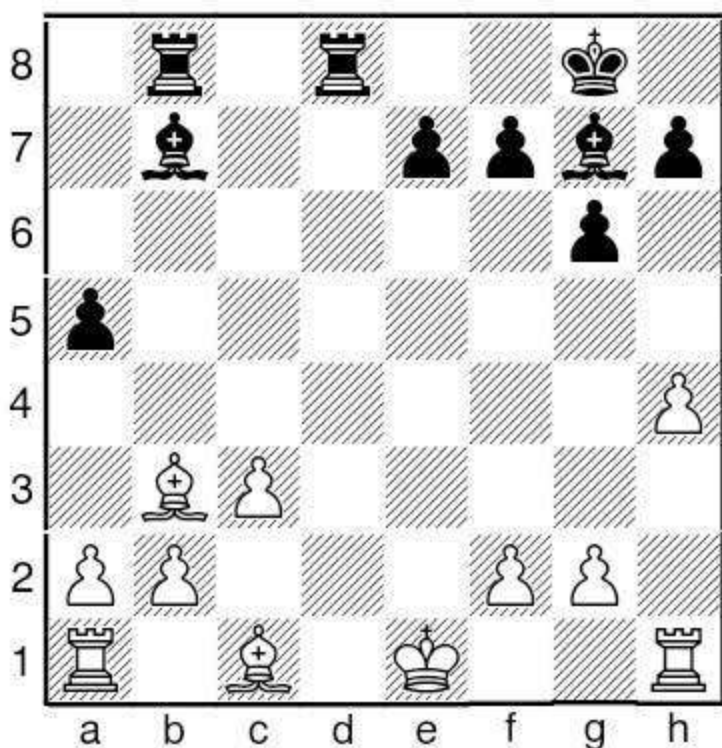
15...♙f5 is slightly inaccurate, and 16.c3 leaves Black struggling to prove his compensation.

15...♖d8 16.♙b3 ♙f6 17.0-0!? ♙xh4 18.♙f4 ♖a8 19.♖fd1 White



has the more threatening pawn majority.

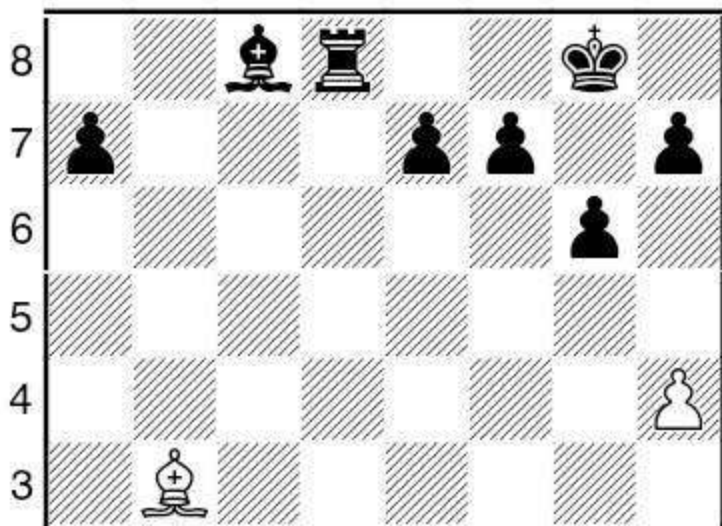
15...a5 16.c3 ♖d8 17.♗b3 ♗b7!? (17...♗d7? 18.♗f4! ♖b7 19.0-0-0±; 17...♗f6 18.h5±)



18.f3 ♗c6 19.♗c2 a4 20.♖b1 a3 21.bxa3 ♗xc3† 22.♔f2 The position is still not completely equal, even though it's hard for White to improve the doubled a-pawns. Even if we lose one of those pawns, we will still have winning chances if we can trade a few pieces and transfer the active king to the queenside.

16.♗xb2 ♖xb2 17.♗b3 ♖d8!

By cutting our king off from the queenside, Black ensures the survival of his rook.

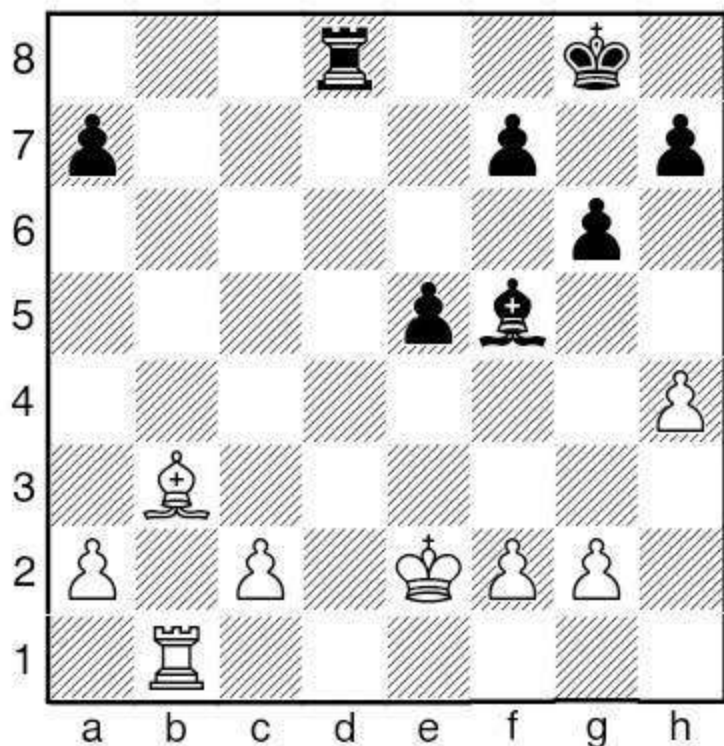


**18.♔e2 ♚f5 19.♞ab1**

19.♞hd1? ♜c8! 20.♞d2 ♚xc2 21.♞c1 ♚d3† 22.♔xd3 ♞xb3†!  
leaves White grovelling for a draw.

**19...♞xb1 20.♞xb1 e5**

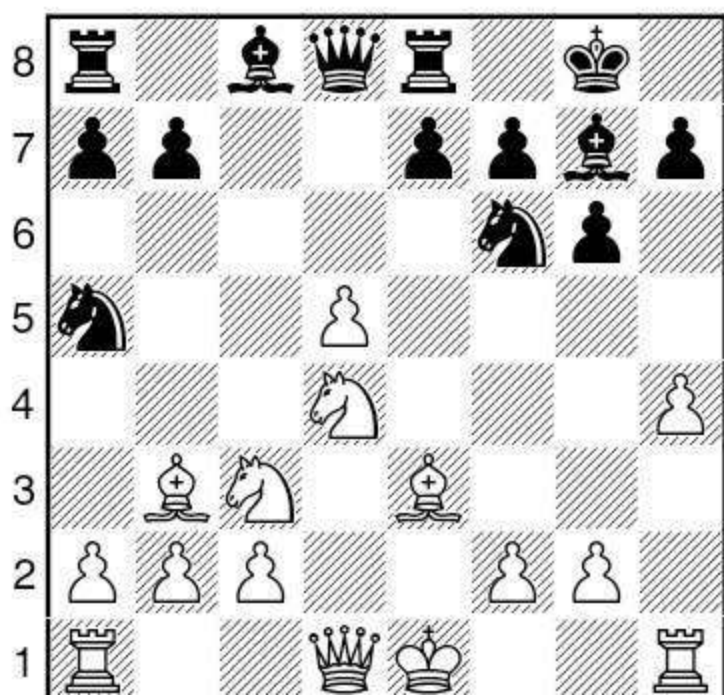
20...♔g7 21.♞c1 ♜c8 22.c4 ♞c5 23.♔d2 is similar.



**21.♞c1 ♜c8 22.c4 ♞c5 23.♔d2**

Intending ♔c3-b4. It should be a draw, but White can still try to create something with his passed pawn.

**B22) 10.exd5 ♞a5**





This is another critical position. The difference from the 8...d5 line that we saw in variation B of the previous chapter is that ...♖e8 and h2-h4 have been included. This rules out the positional plans with 0-0 that I suggested there, but it opens up a lot of interesting tactical possibilities because h2-h4

means we're one step closer to launching a kingside attack, while ...♖e8 isn't as useful for Black's queenside play. So White's task is to somehow utilize this. The most obvious possibilities are the immediate h4-h5 and the preliminary ♔d2 intending 0-0-0. After extensive analysis, however, I decided to focus on a third possibility.

## 11.♘de2!?

This might seem counter-intuitive, but it avoids the knight being forced to go to b3 after ...♘xb3, where it would have been rather passively placed. White may also consider putting the knight on f4, where it defends d5 and supports h4-h5.

11.h5 seems premature in view of 11...♘xb3 12.♘xb3 b5! 13.hxg6 hxg6 when it is not easy for White to progress his attack, while the d5-pawn is likely to fall.

## 11.♔d2

This is a more serious alternative, but I was unable to make it work the way I wanted.

11...♘xb3 12.♘xb3 b5! 13.0-0-0

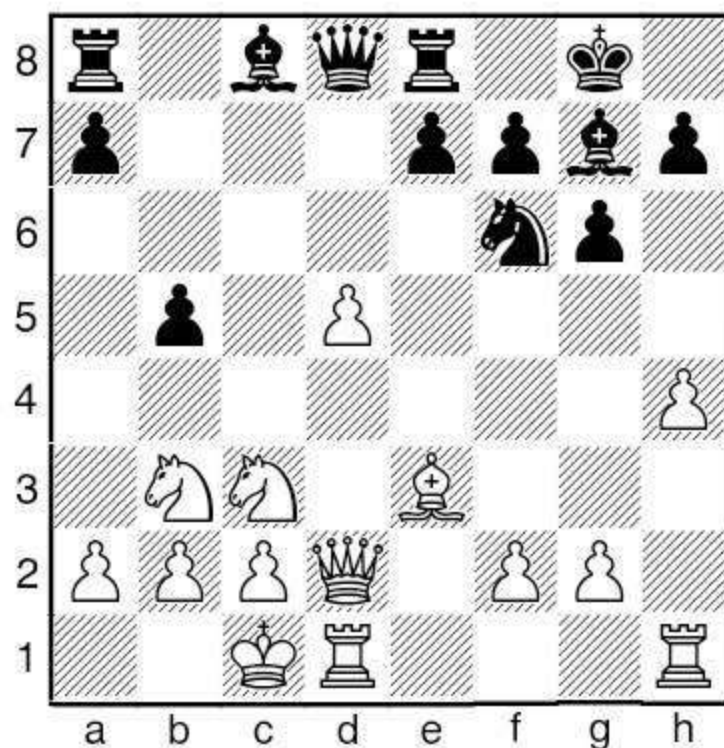
a) 13.a3 ♕b7 14.0-0-0 a5 Black threatens ...b4, and after 15.♘xb5 ♘xd5 he has a promising initiative for the pawn.

b) 13.♘xb5 demands some precision from Black, but eventually he obtains overwhelming compensation: 13...♘e4! (13...♔xd5? 14.♘c7±; 13...♘xd5 14.0-0-0± intending ♕d4) 14.♔b4 a6! (14...♕f5? 15.g4±) 15.♔xe4 (15.♘5d4 a5 16.♔a4 e6!?±) 15...axb5±

c) 13.♖d1 might be objectively the best move, but



certainly only 0-0-0 is critical. With the king stuck in the centre, our position doesn't look pretty: 13...b4 14.♖a4 e6! (14...♙b7 15.♚xb4±) 15.d6 ♘d5



13...b4 14.♖a4

After 14.♖e2 a5! Black's attack is starting to look scary.

14...♙f5 15.f3

15.h5 ♚c7 16.hxg6 ♙xg6↑

15...♖c8 16.♘ac5

16.♙c5 h5 is good for Black, and 16.♘bc5? ♚a5! 17.h5 ♖xc5! is definitely something to avoid.

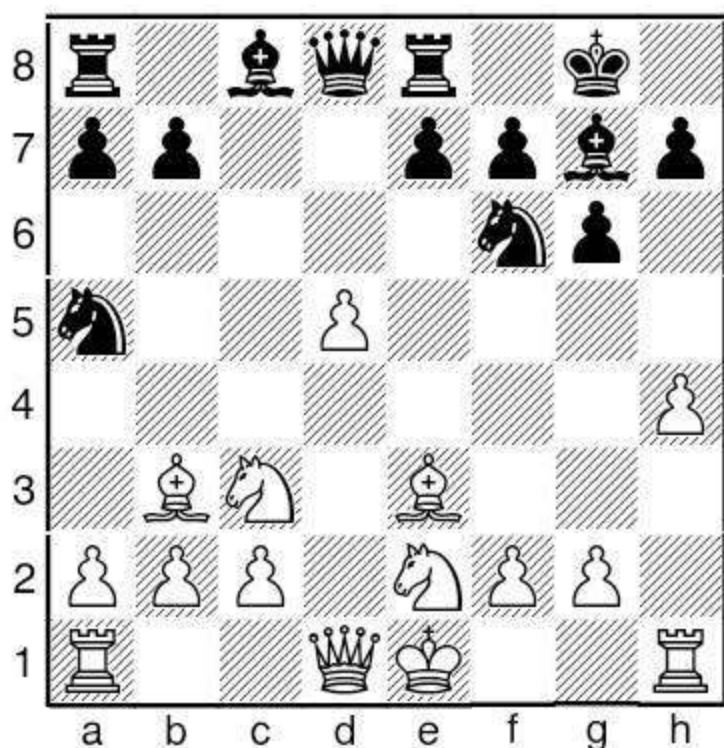
16...h5!

16...a5? 17.g4±



At first I felt that this position must be good for White. Having provoked ...h5, the breakthrough idea with g2-g4 and h4-h5 looks so tempting. However, after testing a few versions of this idea against the computer, I realized that White's attack isn't as effective here as in the main lines of the Yugoslav Attack. Without an effective kingside breakthrough, this is the type of position I would prefer to avoid.

Having seen the problems with the alternatives, we will return to my main suggestion of 11.♘de2!?



## 11...a6!

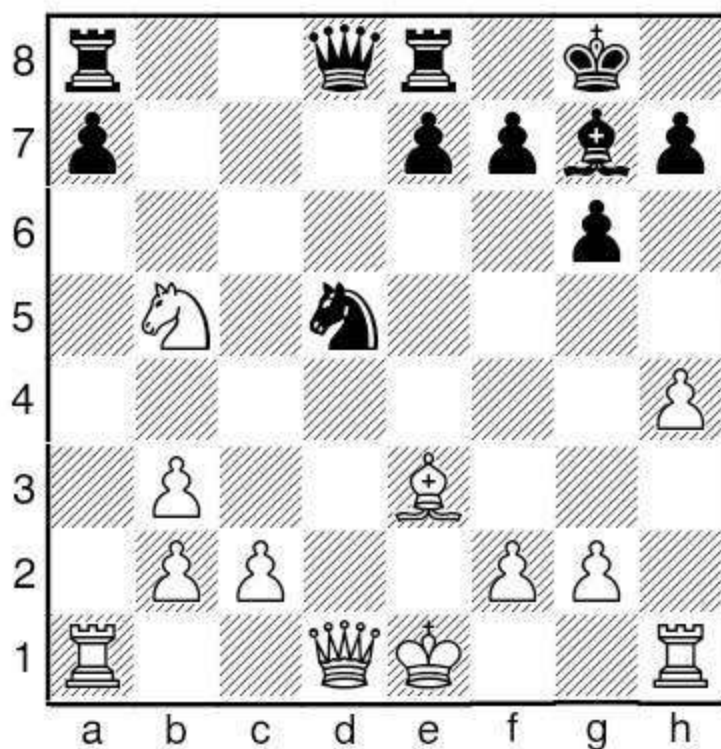
This is the computer's annoying suggestion. Somehow it appears that Black can play slowly and still survive because it's not easy for us to break through on the kingside. There is a lot of scope for further analysis, but my initial efforts did not reveal an advantage.

11...b6 seems a little slow, especially since it doesn't help with Black's future queenside attack. White can always defend the d5-pawn with ♘f4, or ♙d2 and 0-0-0/♖d1, and we can even consider options like 12.♙a4!?

11...b5!? is a recurring theme so it makes sense to check it



here as well. 12.♘xb5! ♕a6 (Also after 12...♘xb3 13.axb3 ♘xd5 14.♕d4 Black will have to prove his compensation for the pawn) 13.♖ec3 ♘xb3 14.axb3 ♕xb5 15.♘xb5 ♘xd5



16.♕d4 (Even 16.♕c1!? could be considered, when Black's compensation is uncertain) 16...♖b8 (16...e5 17.♕xa7) 17.♕xg7 ♖xb5 18.♕h6↑

## 12.h5!?

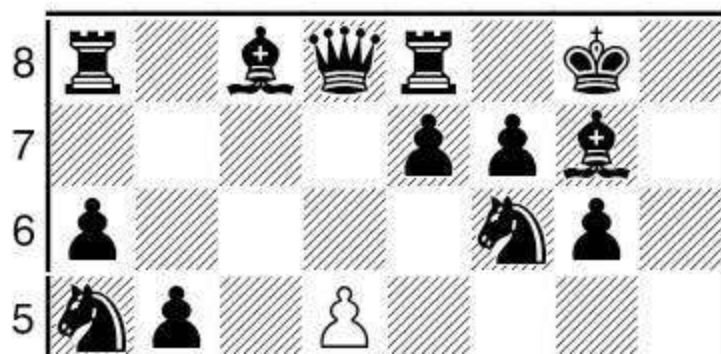
12.♖d2 b5 seems about equal.

## 12...b5

12...♘xh5 restores material equality but I like White's chances after 13.♖d2↑.

## 13.hxg6 hxg6

How should we get the queen involved in the attack?





## 14. ♔d2

14. ♔d2 is interesting, but I don't like the idea of allowing ... ♘g4.

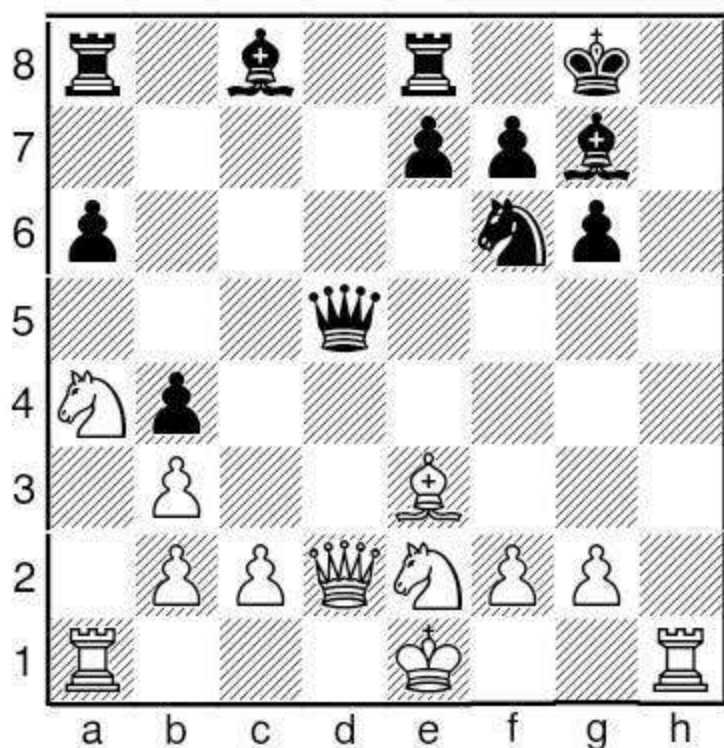
14. ♔c1 has the idea of meeting 14... b4 with 15. ♕h6, but the problem is that the queen will be misplaced. After 15... ♕h8 16. ♖a4 ♗xb3 17. axb3 ♖xd5 Black is at least equal.

## 14... b4

14... ♕b7 15. ♕h6! →

## 15. ♖a4 ♗xb3 16. axb3 ♔xd5

Black is just in time to regain the pawn before ♕h6 can be played.

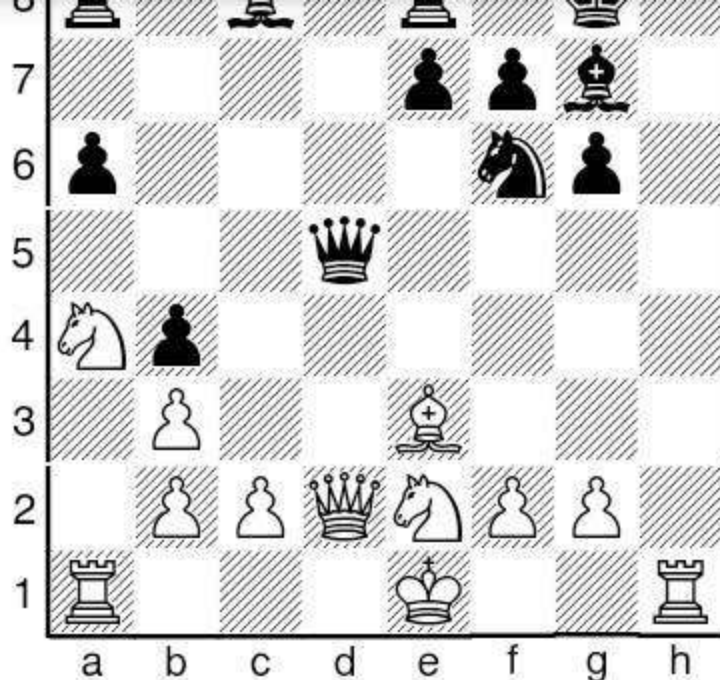


## 17. ♖b6 ♔xd2† 18. ♕xd2 ♖b8 19. ♖c4=

The position remains interesting but objectively it is balanced.

## Conclusion

8... ♖e8!? is a clever, flexible move which looks certain to gain in popularity. Although I cannot prove a definite advantage against it, what I have done is to present a lot of



17. ♖b6 ♔xd2† 18. ♕xd2 ♜b8 19. ♘c4=

The position remains interesting but objectively it is balanced.

## Conclusion

8... ♜e8!? is a clever, flexible move which looks certain to gain in popularity. Although I cannot prove a definite advantage against it, what I have done is to present a lot of original ideas, along with the chance to dictate the character of the game to a large degree. If you are happy to play a quiet position with chances for a small edge, then 9. ♘xc6 is an easy, low-theory option.

If you wish to play more ambitiously then 9.h4!? leads to some fascinating possibilities. If Black tries 9...e6 then 10.h5N offers White good attacking chances. The main line sees Black maintain the balance with precise play, but White has several interesting alternatives along the way.

9...d5!?N is the critical reply, when White once again has a choice. 10. ♘xc6 leads to a simplified position where White risks very little and forces Black to find some good moves to equalize. 10.exd5 is more complicated; Black seems to be holding his own but, with no practical tests to date, there is a huge amount waiting to be discovered.



# Chapter 9

## Accelerated Dragon



### Various 9th Moves

#### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7  
6.Bc4 Nf6 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Bb3 d6

9.f3

A) 9...Na5!? 10.Qd2

A1) 10...a6

A2) 10...Bd7

B) 9...Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Be6 11.Qd2 Ba5 12.0-0 Rfc8 13.Qb1 b5 14.g4

B1) 14...b4

B2) 14...Bxb3

note to move 9



13.g4!

B1) after 15...Rc6!?



16.Bxc6!N

B2) after 16...Bb5



17.h4!N

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Bc4 Nf6  
7.Bc4 0-0 8.Bb3 d6 9.f3





Finally we come to the main lines. At first, it might appear that we are just transposing to the standard Yugoslav Attack, but there is an important difference, as White has had to commit to  $\text{♟b3}$  without the bishop being attacked by  $\dots\text{♖c8}$  or  $\dots\text{♘e5}$ . This might not seem like a big deal, but there are a number of ways in which Black may try to exploit it.

In this chapter we will deal with **A)**  $9\dots\text{♞a5}!?$  and **B)**  $9\dots\text{♞xd4}$ .

The main line of  $9\dots\text{♝d7}$  can be found in the next chapter.

$9\dots\text{♔a5}$   $10.\text{♔d2}$   $\text{♞xd4}$   $11.\text{♝xd4}$   $\text{♝e6}$  reaches variation B below.

$9\dots\text{a6}$   $10.\text{♔d2}$   $\text{♝d7}?!$

$10\dots\text{♞a5}$  is a better try – see variation A1.

The present way of preparing  $\dots\text{b5}$  seems particularly slow, and White can just go for his usual attack.

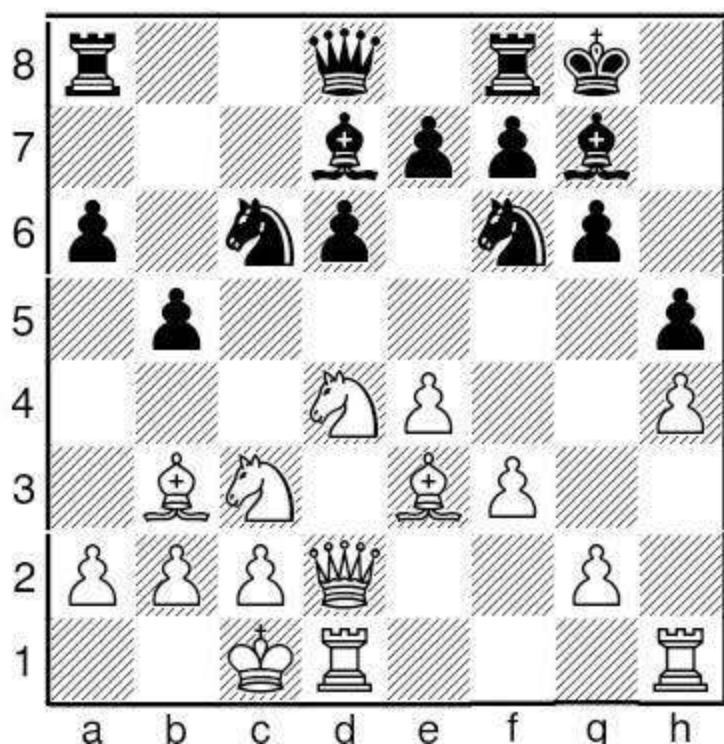
$11.\text{h4}$   $\text{h5}$

$11\dots\text{b5}$   $12.\text{h5}\rightarrow$

$12.\text{0-0-0}$

$12.\text{♞xc6}!?$  is interesting but not necessary.

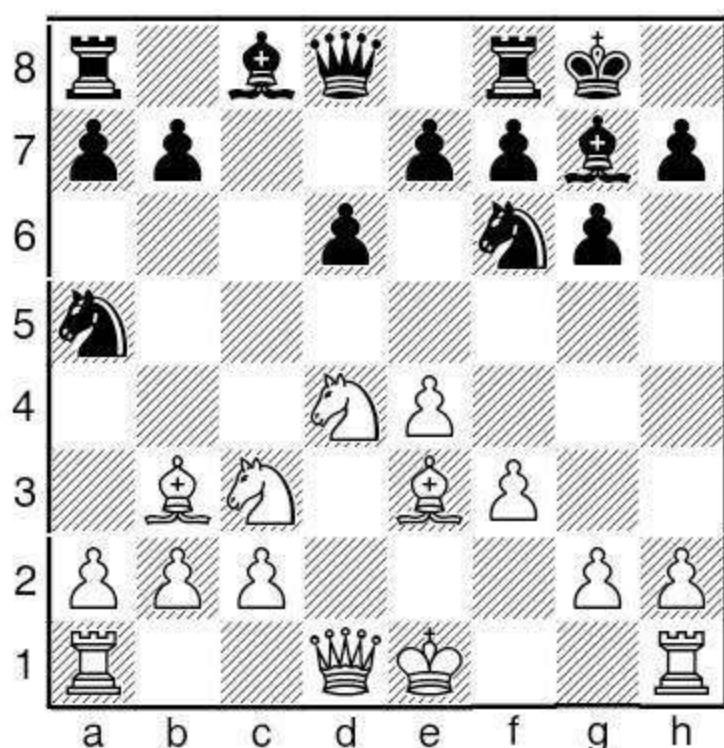
$12\dots\text{b5}$



13.g4! ♖e5 14.♗h6 a5 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.g5 ♘e8 17.f4 ♘c4  
 18.♗xc4 bxc4 19.f5±

Chuprov – Pozdeev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. White could probably have improved along the way, but his advantage is not in question.

### A) 9...♘a5!?



I always used to think that plans with ...♘a5xb3 made no sense at all, but there are actually a lot of subtleties and move-order issues involved. Black has done surprisingly well in recent games, mainly because White can easily go wrong by playing natural-looking moves.

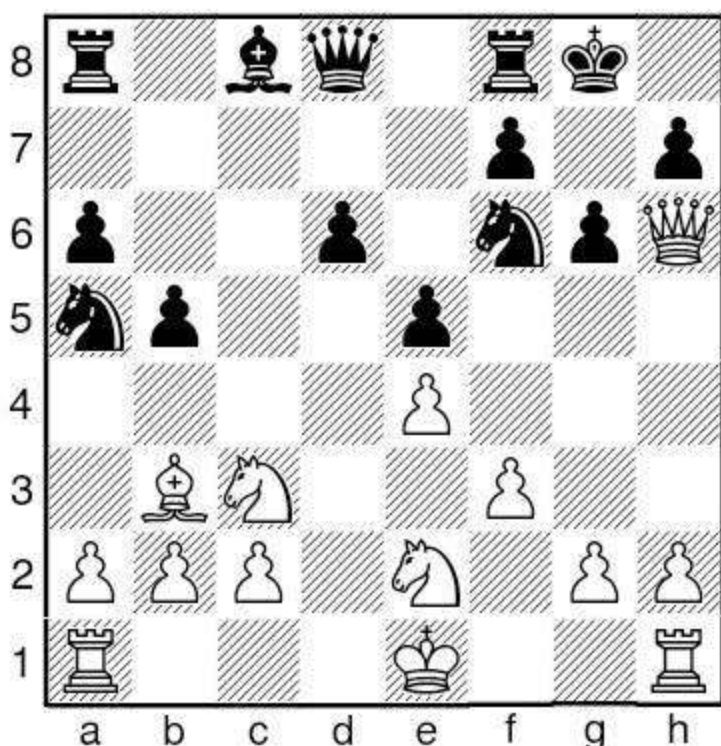
### 10.♔d2

We will look at **A1)** 10...a6 and **A2)** 10...♗d7. The immediate 10...♘xb3 is playable, although I don't think Black gains anything by making this exchange so early, and he risks reducing his attacking options. 11.cxb3 is fine, and will most likely transpose to one of the main lines below. White may also consider 11.axb3!?, trying to punish Black's last move and intending to delay castling. 11...♗d7 12.g4 We have transposed to the note on 12.axb3 in variation A2.



## A1) 10...a6 11.0-0-0

Just as in the Chinese Dragon, White should refrain from swapping the dark-squared bishops too quickly: 11.♗h6?! ♗xh6! 12.♔xh6 e5! 13.♞de2 b5



Suddenly Black starts playing more in the style of the Najdorf than the Dragon, and White is too far from implementing an attack. 14.♔d2 b4 15.♞a4 ♞xb3 16.axb3 a5 17.0-0-0 ♖a6 ♞ Hou Yifan – Nakamura, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

### 11...b5

11...♞xb3† 12.cxb3 is likely to transpose.

### 12.h4

12.g4!? is certainly possible if White doesn't want to allow the h4/...h5 impasse, but I don't consider it a problem.

### 12...♞xb3† 13.cxb3!?

13.axb3 has been more popular, but I generally prefer to take with the c-pawn as it seriously impedes Black's counterplay on the queenside.

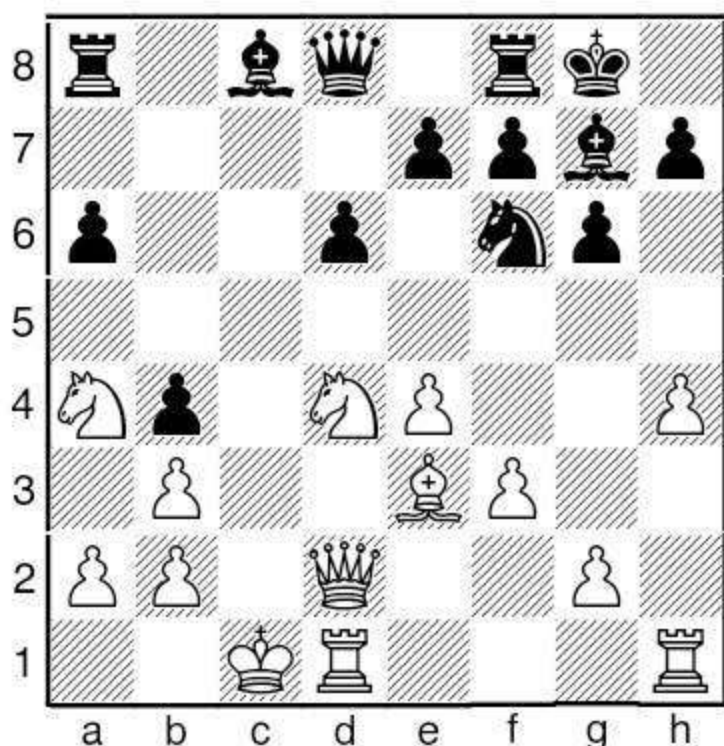
### 13...b4



13...♙d7 14.♚b1 is similar to the main line below.

### 14.♘a4!

14.♘ce2 ♙b7! (14...a5 15.h5 a4 16.bxa4 ♖xa4 17.♚b1±)  
15.h5 e5 16.♘c2 d5 gives Black decent counterplay.



### 14...♙d7N

This seems to me like the most logical try, although it does not solve Black's problems.

14...a5 was played in Jesch – Vogel, corr. 1978. Now 15.♚b1N is a normal move which gives White a typical advantage, although the direct 15.h5!?N, may be even stronger.

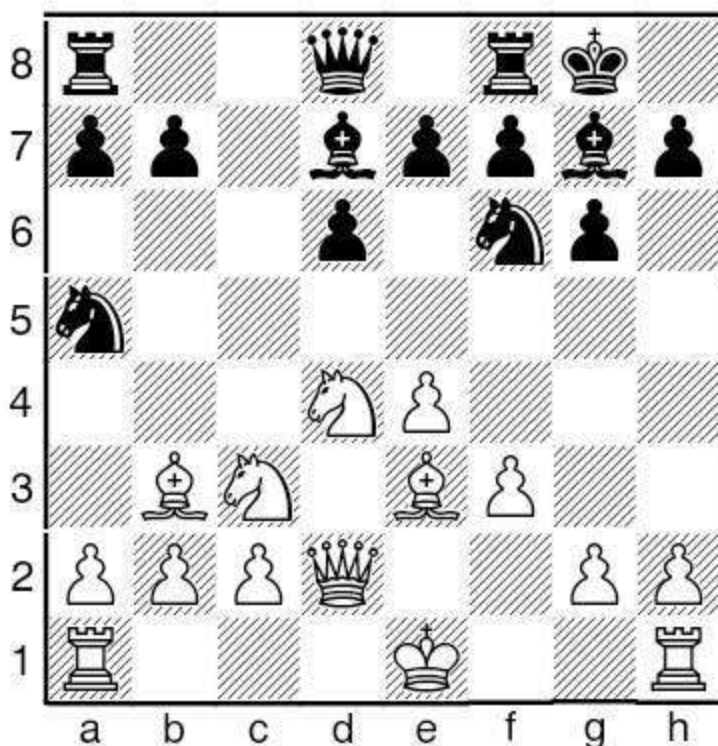
In the event of 14...h5 I propose 15.♚b1, tidying up the king's position just in case, before launching an attack with g2-g4. Black's position looks unenviable and without much counterplay.

### 15.♚b1 ♙a5

Going after the a4-knight makes a certain amount of sense, but Black's extra pawn will be irrelevant as he has no way to create an attack.

16.g4 ♙xa4 17.bxa4 ♖xa4 18.h5+

## A2) 10...♔d7



### 11.g4!

Continuing to delay castling. It is worth discussing a few other possibilities to get a feel for Black's ideas:

11.♔h6?! is inadvisable for the same reason as in the Hou Yifan – Nakamura game: 11...♘xb3 12.axb3 ♔xh6! 13.♙xh6 e5! 14.♘de2 b5± Inarkiev – Salgado Lopez, Dubai 2014.

11.h4 h5 12.♔h6 (12.g4!? led to fascinating complications in Ljubicic – Noble, email 2010, but we don't need to resort to such a double-edged continuation) 12...♖c8! (12...♘xb3 13.axb3 ♔xh6 14.♙xh6 e5 15.♘de2 b5 16.g4!) After a subsequent 0-0-0 and ...♘c4 we will transpose to a variation of the Yugoslav Attack which falls outside our repertoire.

11.0-0-0 ♘xb3† 12.cxb3

This method of recapturing should almost always be preferred when White has already castled.

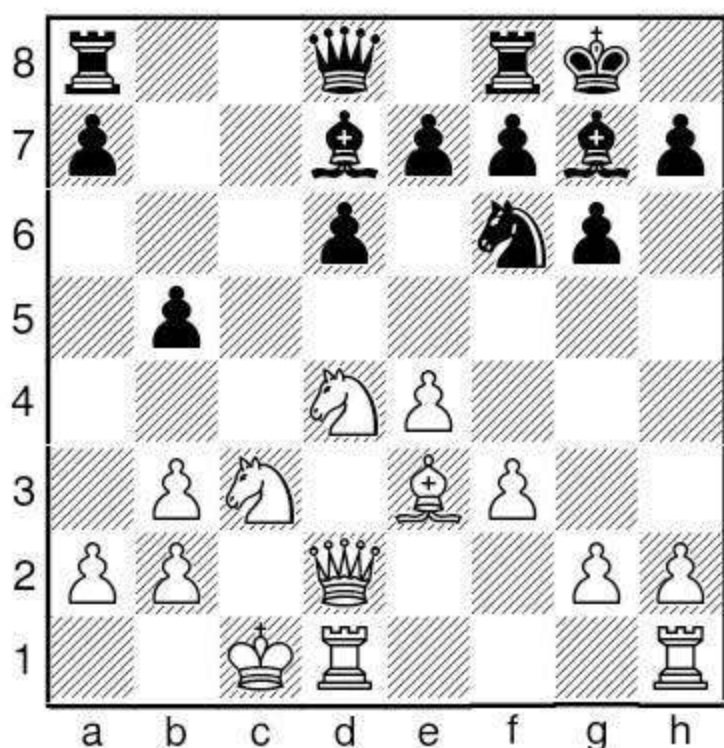
12...b5!?

12...♖b8 is too slow: 13.♙b1 b5 14.g4 b4 15.♘ce2 ♙a5 16.h4 ♖fc8 17.h5± Saric – Bologan, Poikovsky 2014.

12...♙a5 13.♙b1 ♖fc8 14.g4 b5 15.h4 b4 16.♘ce2 ♙c7



17.h5 e5 18.♖c2 a5 19.♘g3 ♕e6 20.♘f5, Evtushenko – Matei, corr. 2012.



### 13.♘dxb5

If we don't capture this pawn then Black saves a full tempo compared to the ...a6 variations. Even then, the plan of ♖b1 and meeting ...b4 with ♘a4 might be dangerous for Black, but it will be much harder to prove, and I would rather avoid such in-depth analysis of this line.

### 13...♔b8 14.♘d4 a5

With a rather messy game in Strengell – Skarba, email 2008.

### 11...♘xb3

11...♖c8 12.0-0-0 just gives White a favourable type of Dragon position. 12...♘xb3† 13.cxb3 transposes to 12...♖c8 13.0-0-0 in the notes to the main line below; as we will see, the rook on c8 isn't particularly useful in this structure. Alternatively, 12...♘c4 13.♕xc4 ♖xc4 allows White to transpose to Chapter 5 with 14.♔b1 if he wishes, although Black's irregular move order allows us the option of saving time with 14.h4 if we



prefer.

## 12.cxb3!?

I consider this the simplest route to an advantage. Compared with 11.0-0-0 ♖xb3† 12.cxb3 above, the key difference is that ...b5 isn't possible – or at least it makes far less sense when White has yet to commit his king to the queenside.

Since we have not yet castled, taking with the a-pawn also has its plus points:

## 12.axb3 a5!?

The only move which makes any sense.

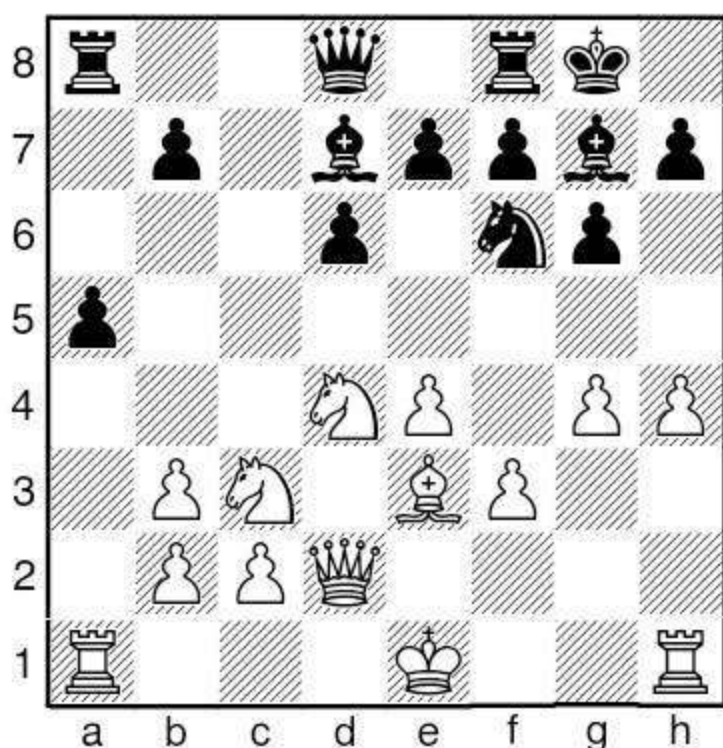
12...a6 13.h4 h5 14.gxh5 ♘xh5 15.0-0-0→

12...e6 is pointless. 13.h4 h5 14.♗g5± Turkov – Bobrov, corr. 2012.

## 13.h4

13.0-0-0 a4! is Black's idea of course.

For some reason a few correspondence games have continued 13.0-0, which is just ridiculous.



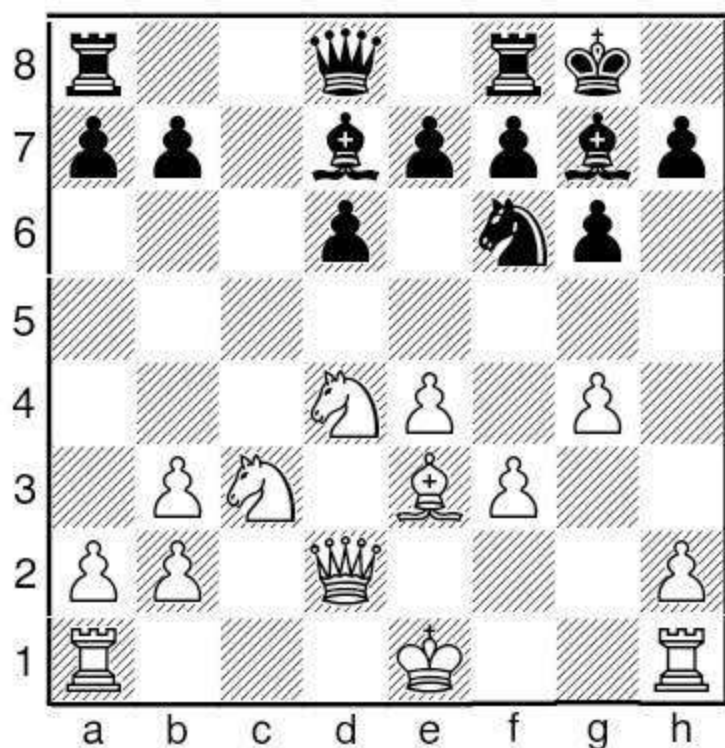
## 13...h5 14.gxh5

14.♗h6!?N 14...hxg4 15.h5 is messy, and I would rather not analyse it in great detail when a simpler

alternative exists.

14...♞xh5 15.♞h6±

Le Page – Gutovskiy, email 2011. White will play 0-0-0 at some point in order to bring his second rook to the kingside. Of course the ...a4 threat is hanging in the air, so the outcome is still wide open. That is why I prefer to recapture with the c-pawn.



12...a5!?N

12...b5? is pointless here. 13.♞dxb5±

12...e5? is hardly ever a good move when ♞h6 has not been played. 13.♞c2±

12...♞b8 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♞b1 transposes to the Saric – Bologan game, as mentioned in the note to White's 11th move.

After 12...♞c8 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♞b1 b4 15.♞ce2 the c8-rook is misplaced. (15.♞a4N also offers White good chances.)

13.h4

We can just leave the king in the centre for a while.

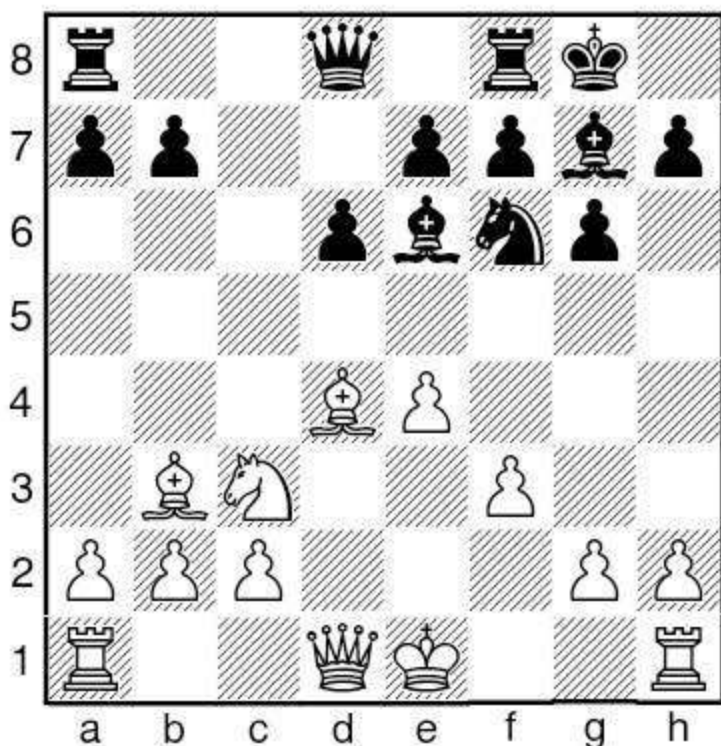
13.a4!? can also be considered.



13...h5 14.gxh5 ♖xh5 15.♗h6↑

I like White's attacking prospects. (15.0-0-0!? a4 16.bxa4 ♗xa4 17.♖dg1 is also interesting, but it makes sense to postpone castling for another move or two.)

B) 9...♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗e6



This position can also be reached via a normal Dragon move order. In that case ♗xe6 would be a serious additional option, but here it would make no sense as White has already spent a tempo on ♗b3.

11.♙d2 ♙a5

11...♖c8 12.0-0-0 ♗xb3 13.axb3 ♖c6 Even though Black has done well in the handful of old games from this position, it doesn't seem particularly threatening.





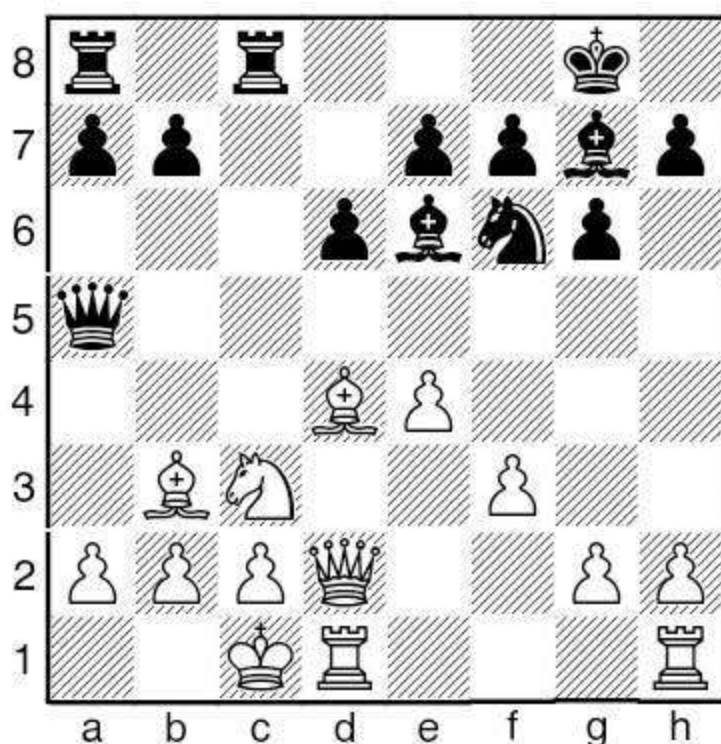
14.♙b1 e6 15.g4 ♖e7 16.♖he1 ♜fc8 17.g5 ♘d7 18.♙xg7 ♙xg7  
 19.♘b5 ♘e5 20.c4± Bartel – Bocharov, Warsaw 2005.

## 12.0-0-0 ♜fc8

This idea of Nakamura breathed new life into Black's set-up.

12...b5 13.♙b1 b4 used to be played, but after 14.♘d5  
 ♙xd5 15.exd5 ♖b5 16.♖d3± White has better chances.

Anisimov – Belous, Ulan Ude 2009, is one nice example of White's chances, although there are many others. Black has drawn several games as well, but defending an inferior endgame is not normally what Black wants to get from the Dragon.



## 13.♙b1 b5

13...♙xb3 14.cxb3 has occurred in a lot of games, but I don't see anything better for Black than playing ...b5 in the near future, with a likely transposition to variation B2 below.

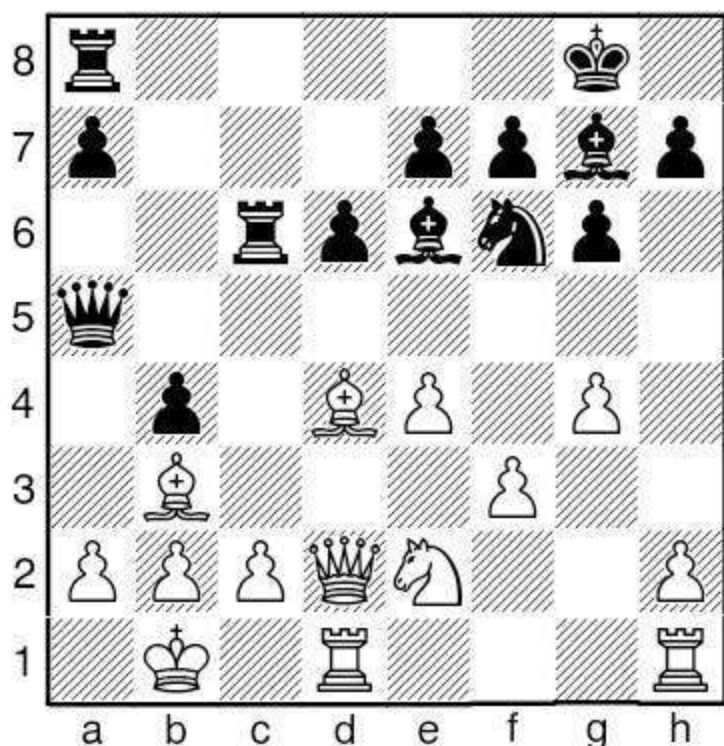
## 14.g4

14.h4 allows Black to create a mess with 14...♙xb3  
 15.cxb3 b4! 16.♘e2 e5! followed by ...d5. This could be  
 checked further, but I prefer the text move which avoids

the whole issue.

We will consider **B1) 14...b4** and **B2) 14...♗xb3**.

**B1) 14...b4 15.♘e2 ♜c6!?**



This is an interesting attempt to do without ...♗xb3.

**16.♗xe6!N**

16.a4!?N is possible, but I am wary of playing this move when Black has the possibility of playing for ...♗d7xa4.

**16...fxe6 17.h4**

17.c3 ♜b8! 18.cxb4 ♜xb4 seems dangerous for White.

**17...e5**

An ugly move, but Black needs to do it. The point is that 17...♜ac8?! allows 18.c3! ♜b8 (wasting a move is too much in these positions, but 18...bxc3 19.♗xc3± is not much good for Black either) 19.cxb4 ♜xb4 20.♜c1 and White is clearly better.

**18.♗e3 ♜ac8 19.h5!**

19.c3 ♜a6 20.a3 bxa3 21.b3 is messy, but it feels like it



could easily turn bad for White.

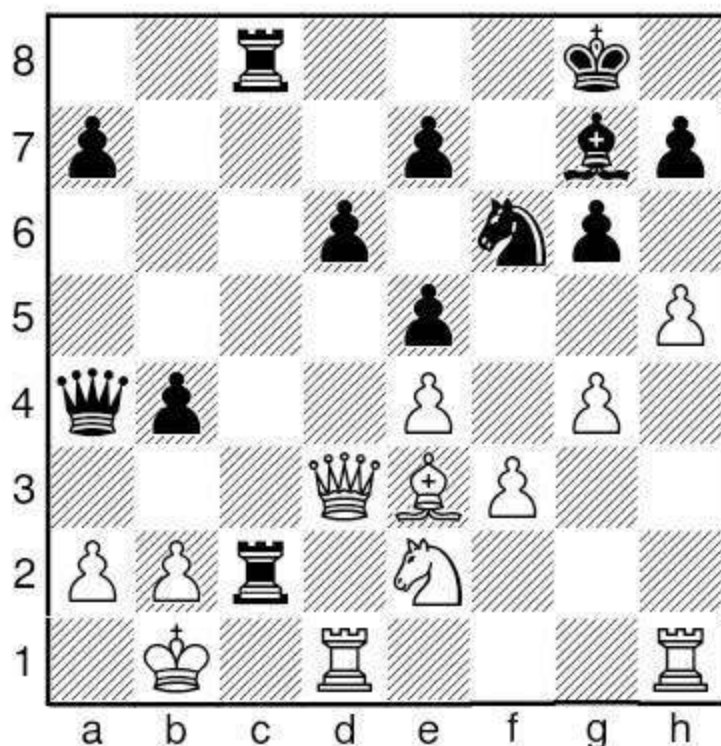
### 19...♖xc2 20.♔d3

I think Black will have a tough time here despite the extra pawn. His pieces have few prospects, particularly the g7-bishop, and White doesn't have to be in a hurry to conduct his attack.

### 20...♔a4

After 20...♘d7 21.♖c1 ♖xc1† 22.♖xc1 ♖xc1† 23.♘xc1± the queen is ready to infiltrate Black's position.

### 20...♖2c7 21.♖c1=



### 21.h6!?

21.♖c1 ♖xc1† 22.♘xc1= is a good alternative.

### 21...♔f8 22.g5 ♘d7 23.♖c1 ♖xc1† 24.♖xc1 ♖xc1† 25.♘xc1±

Black is under considerable pressure. At the very least, White should be able to win the b4-pawn to reach a favourable endgame.

### B2) 14...♔xb3 15.cxb3





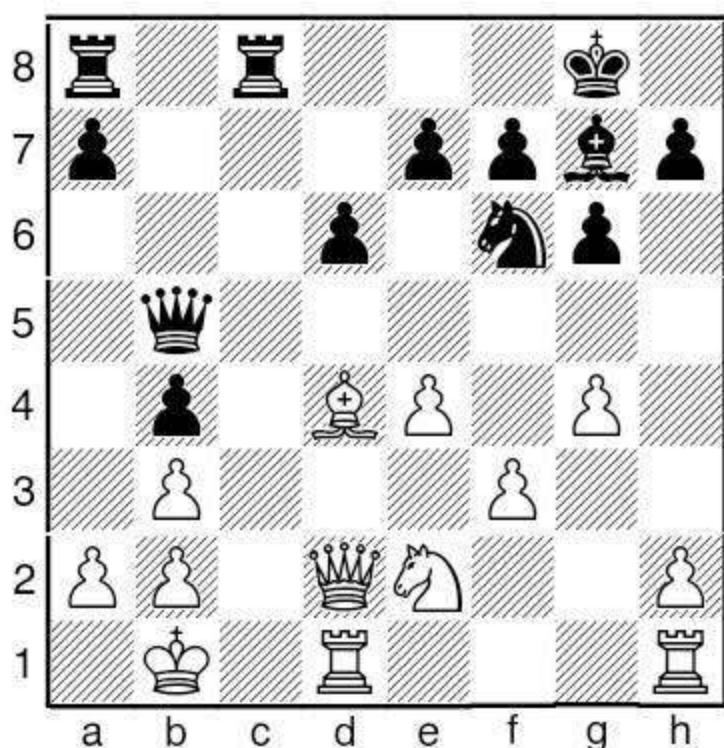
This position may also arise if Black opts to take on b3 a move or two earlier.

### 15...b4 16.♘e2 ♔b5

The ...a5-a4 plan may look vaguely worrying, but White just needs to be ready to meet it with bxa4 and b2-b3, which should block Black's initiative completely.

After 16...e5 17.♕f2± Black cannot play 17...d5 because of 18.g5 – this was the idea behind 14.g4 instead of 14.h4.

16...♖c6 is well met by 17.a4!, when White is ready to develop positional pressure on the queenside. The a2-a4 move serves multiple purposes: apart from nullifying the threat of ...♖a6, it gives White's king a safe spot on a2. This may prove crucial after the likely rook exchanges, as we will not have to worry about too many queen checks. 17...♖ac8 (17...e5 18.♕f2±) 18.♖c1± White has a pleasant positional edge and Black has no real prospects of counterplay.



### 17.h4!N

17.♖c1 has been played a few times, but it is too early to

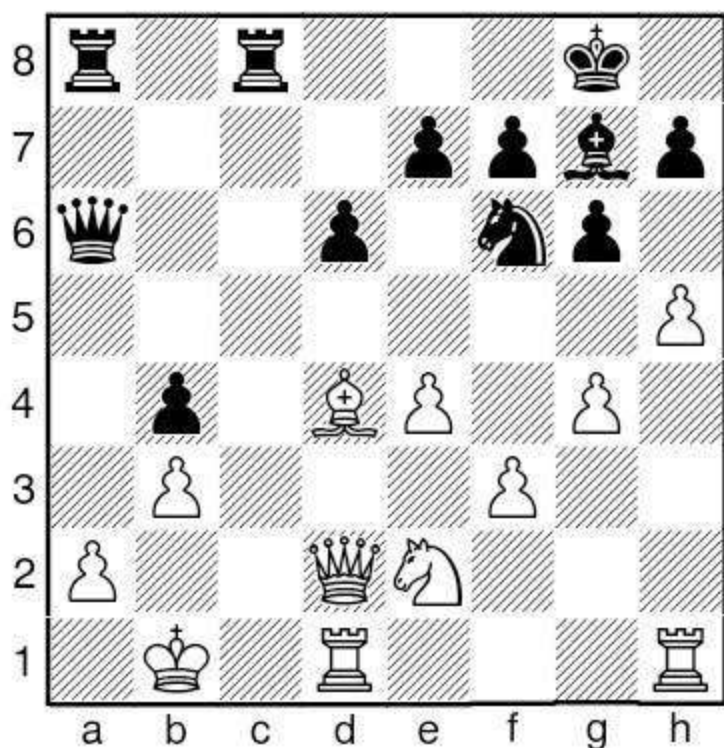
go for exchanges. Besides, the ensuing queen-and-minor-piece endgame will not be as pleasant without the shelter on a2 for the king.

17...♖c7!?

17...e5 18.♗f2± is pleasant for White as usual.

17...h5 18.gxh5! opening up the kingside can't be good for Black. 18...♔xh5 19.♔d3, Intending ♘f4/♘g3 and h4-h5.

17...a5 18.h5 a4 is an obvious plan but, as I have already mentioned, White has a nice way to counter it: 19.bxa4! (19.hxg6 axb3!) 19...♔xa4 20.b3! ♔a6

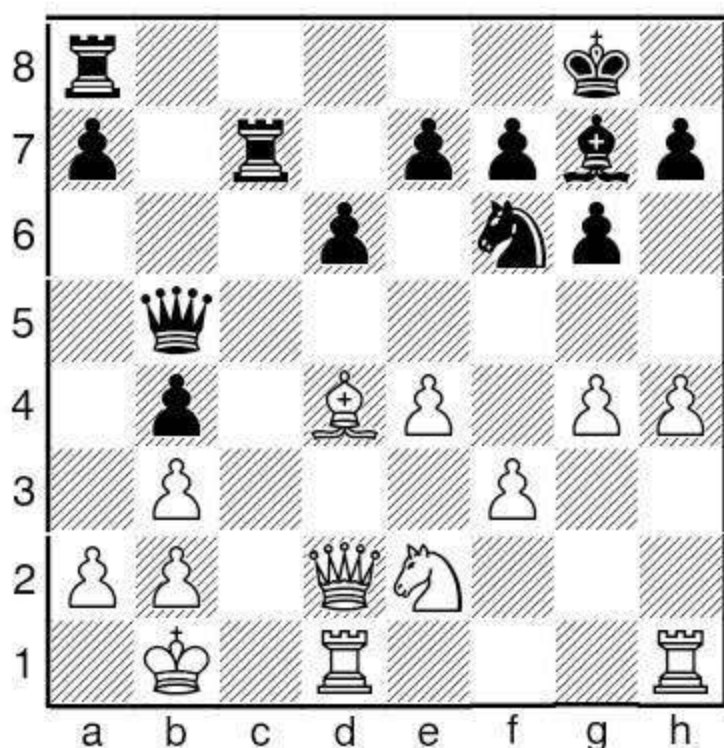


21.hxg6 (21.h6!? ♗h8 22.♖c1± is an interesting alternative, abandoning the kingside attack in order to play on the queenside, especially along the c-file. The pawn on h6 means that Black will constantly have to watch out for threats along the back rank.) 21...hxg6 22.♘c1± White has attacking prospects along the h-file, while I see little danger on the queenside.

The text move is a logical try, aiming to double rooks having first placed the queen on b5 to prevent the a2-a4 move. It is actually not easy to prove something for White, but I



eventually found a nice way to exploit the position of Black's queen.



### 18. ♕e3!?

18.h5 ♖ac8 is annoying, as 19.hxg6? allows 19...♖c2!.

18.g5 and 18.♖c1 leads to simplifications, but it's not clear if they benefit us.

### 18...a5

18...♖ac8 19.♘d4 ♚b7 20.♕h6 ♕h8 21.h5 gives White a promising attack.

### 19. ♖c1!

The most flexible choice, not committing to ♘d4 yet.

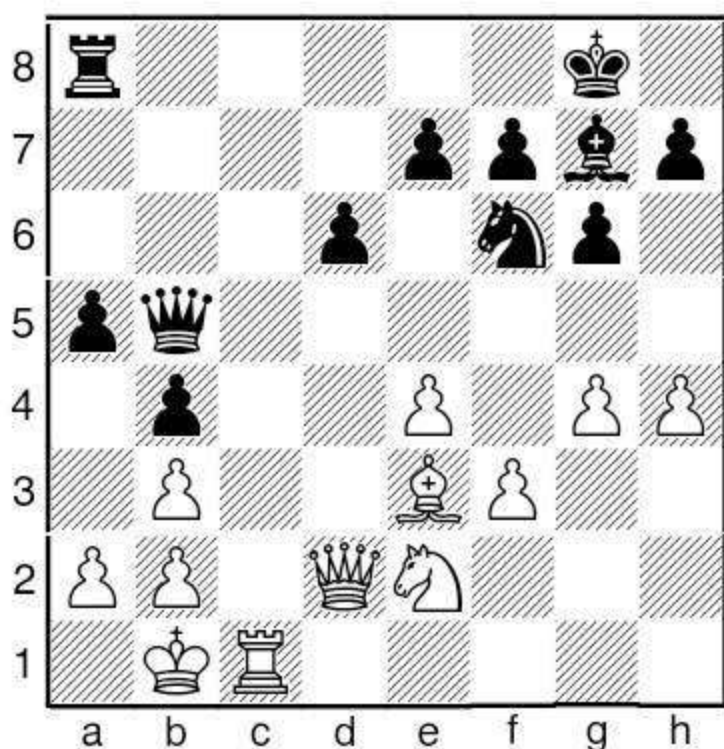
19.h5 a4 20.bxa4 ♚xa4 21.b3 does not work so well here on account of 21...♚a3!, when ♕e3 proves to be a huge waste of time. 22.♕d4 e5 23.♕a1 d5!→

### 19...♖xc1†

19...♖ac8 20.♖xc7 ♖xc7 21.h5± also leaves Black under pressure.



20.♖xc1



20...♘d7

20...a4 21.♘d4 ♔a6 22.bxa4 ♔xa4 23.b3 ♔a6 24.♔e2±

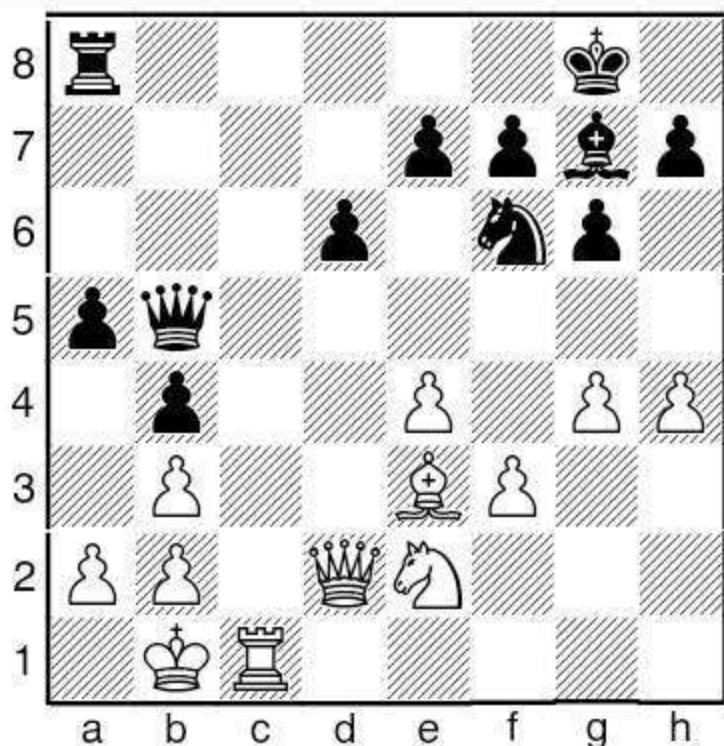
21.♘f4±

Preparing ♘d5. White controls the c-file and can continue improving his position on either side of the board.

## Conclusion

9...♘a5!? is a weird but tricky move which bears some resemblance to the Chinese Dragon of Chapter 2. White should avoid an early ♙h6 on account of the Najdorf-like ...e5 plan, and instead complete development with long castling. If the knight exchanges on b3, then we will almost always recapture with the c-pawn in order to keep things solid in front of the king.

9...♘xd4 10.♙xd4 ♙e6 is a somewhat neglected set-up, but not a bad one. Once again White should tidy up his king's position and be ready to take on b3 with the c-pawn. It is important not to rush into a kingside onslaught, as in some lines White can utilize the open c-file to turn the tables on



**20...♘d7**

20...a4 21.♘d4 ♔a6 22.bxa4 ♔xa4 23.b3 ♔a6 24.♔e2±

**21.♘f4±**

Preparing ♘d5. White controls the c-file and can continue improving his position on either side of the board.

## Conclusion

9...♘a5!? is a weird but tricky move which bears some resemblance to the Chinese Dragon of Chapter 2. White should avoid an early ♙h6 on account of the Najdorf-like ...e5 plan, and instead complete development with long castling. If the knight exchanges on b3, then we will almost always recapture with the c-pawn in order to keep things solid in front of the king.

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# Chapter 10

## Accelerated Dragon



9...♘d7 10.♙d2

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♘g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6  
7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3 d6 9.f3 ♘d7 10.♙d2 ♘xd4 11.♙xd4 b5  
12.a4!?

A) 12...bxa4 13.♙xa4

A1) 13...♙e6

A2) 13...♙xa4

B) 12...b4 13.♘d5 ♘xd5

B1) 14.♙xg7

B2) 14.exd5!? ♙xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙a5

B21) 16.h4

B22) 16.♙f2!?

A1) after 14...♙c7



15.♘d1!?

A2) after 16...♙b7



17.♘d1!?

B22) after 17...♙fe8



18.♙ad1!?

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♘g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6  
7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3 d6 9.f3 ♘d7



Finally, the main line. It might appear that we are just transposing to the main lines of the Dragon, but there is an important difference – White has been forced to retreat his bishop to b3 without being provoked by ...♖c8 or ...♘e5. This might not seem like a huge difference, but it can lead to a whole new variation because Black can go for the plan of ...♘xd4 and ...b5, like in Chapter 3, but without spending time on the essentially useless ...♖c8.

From this tabiya I decided to cover two contrasting approaches for White, each of which may appeal for different reasons. The present chapter will focus on:

## 10. ♔d2

10.h4!? is a more aggressive option which may lead to wild complications. This will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

The text move is the most popular continuation. It invites a transposition to the main lines of the Dragon but allows the independent plan of ...♘xd4 and ...b5. My recommended lines often lead to calmer positions where White can aim for a small but enduring positional advantage.

## 10... ♘xd4

Obviously we are not worried about 10...♖c8, which immediately transposes to the main lines of the Yugoslav Attack.

## 11. ♙xd4 b5

This may be regarded as Black's reward for choosing the Accelerated Dragon move order, which forced White to play an early ♙b3 in order to get the desired Yugoslav set-up.

11...a5 makes less sense for Black. 12.a4 ♙e6 13.♙xe6 fxe6 14.h4 This position is covered later – see 11...a5 in the notes to variation A of the next chapter.



## 12.a4!?

I think this is the optimal timing of this pawn move, even though Black has not yet forced it with ...a5.

12.h4 a5 13.a4 is similar, and I wondered if this might be a better version for us because Black may do without ...a5 in our main lines. However, the problem is seen after 13...bxa4 followed by ...h5, when it is hard for White to break through on the kingside, and kingside castling will not be ideal with the pawn committed to h4.

12.0-0 a5 13.a4 is another idea, but in that case Black can switch plans with 13...b4!. In the structure after ♖d5 followed by exd5, White needs to be able to threaten a kingside attack to put real pressure on Black, and this is unlikely to happen when we have already castled short.

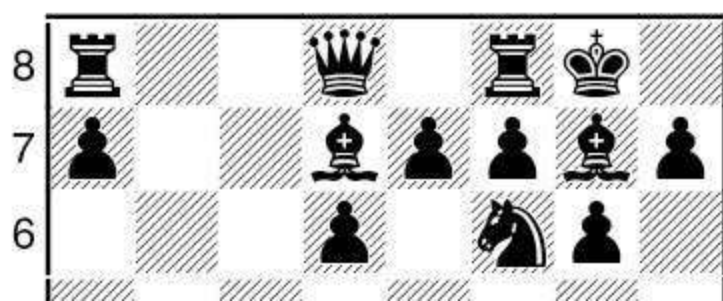
After the text move Black faces an important choice between **A)** 12...bxa4 and **B)** 12...b4.

### A) 12...bxa4

This has been the slightly more common choice in over-the-board play. White has not been able to show much against it so far, while Black's play tends to be fairly straightforward. Still, I am hopeful of exploiting Black's weak a-pawn.

## 13.♙xa4

Ideally I would have preferred to recapture with the knight, but after 13.♘xa4 ♕e6! White is virtually forced to change the structure with 14.♙xe6 fxe6, when I failed to find any advantage for White.

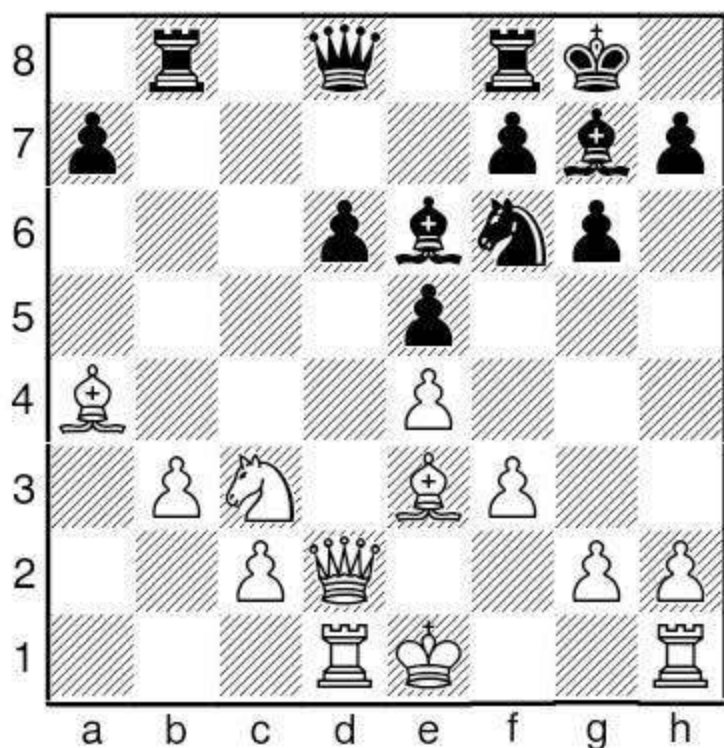




Black can avoid the bishop trade with **A1)** 13...♗e6, but the main line is **A2)** 13...♗xa4.

Several other moves have been tried, but none of them are especially troublesome for us. Here are some brief examples:

13...e5 is positionally risky. 14.♗e3 ♗e6 15.♖d1 (15.0-0 d5 16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♗xd5 19.♖fd1± Kanep – Seeman, Finland 2008) 15...♖b8 16.b3



16...♙a5 (16...♖c8N may be a better try although 17.0-0 still favours White, as 17...♙c7 can be met by 18.♘b5) 17.♘d5 ♙xd2† 18.♖xd2 ♗xd5 19.exd5 a6 20.♗c6± Grigoriant – Atakisi, Dresden 2007.

13...♖b8 seems a bit aimless. 14.♗xd7 (14.b3 is also good) 14...♘xd7 15.♗xg7 ♙xg7 16.b3± This can be compared with some of the variations discussed in more detail below. White should generally be happy with the exchange of dark-squared bishops. Later the knight will transfer to e3 to avoid any pressure along the c-file, and White should be able to keep an edge happily ever after.

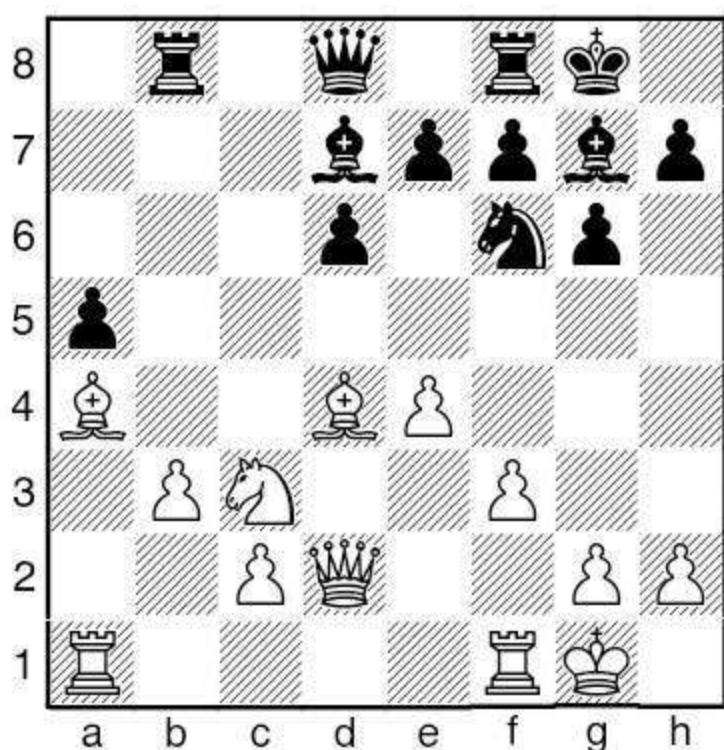
13...a5?!



This has been the choice of some surprisingly strong players, but the pawn is definitely weaker on a5 than on a7.

14.0-0 ♖b8 15.b3!

15.♗xd7 is inaccurate due to 15...♔xd7!. This seems to be the only real advantage of Black's 13th move, as White is unable to capture the pawn on a7 with gain of tempo. Thus Black avoids the bishop exchange and gets some activity along the c-file. 16.b3 ♔c7! 17.♖f2 (17.♘e2 ♖fc8 puts some pressure on the c-pawn) 17...e6 Black was okay in Vallejo Pons – Topalov, Leon (rapid) 2012, since White's pieces were not ideally placed and ...d5 was on the way.



15...♖b4

15...♔c7?! 16.♗xd7± and 15...♗xa4?! 16.♖xa4± only help White.

15...e6 is not so bad, but White keeps a pleasant edge with 16.♘e2 or 16.♗xd7.

16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♗xd7 ♔xd7 18.♖xa5±

Edwards – Pasqua, Internet 2012.

A1) 13...♗e6 14.0-0 ♔c7

## 15. ♖d1!?N

Once you see the 13... ♖xa4 lines, you will realize that I am obsessed with putting my knight on e3 in this structure. It just looks so nice there, whereas on c3 it was just a target for Black's major pieces on the b- and c-files.

## 15... ♖d7

After 15... ♖h5?! 16. ♖xg7 ♔xg7 17. ♖e3 Black's knight is just misplaced.

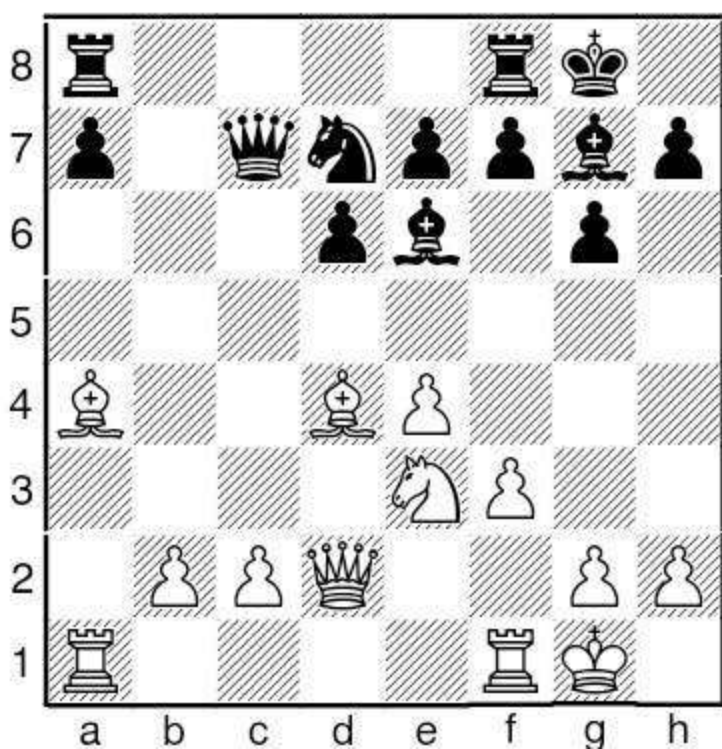
15... d5 16. e5 ♖d7 17. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 18. ♖e3± is pleasant for White.

15... ♖fc8 16. ♖e3 a5 17. b3± Black will soon run out of useful moves, while White has several small ways to continue improving.

## 16. ♖e3!

It is useful to delay exchanging on g7, as you will see in the note with 16... a5 below. Aside from that, the timing doesn't matter too much.

After 16. ♖xg7 ♔xg7 17. ♖e3 a5 18. c4!? ♖c5 19. ♖b5 White may still hope for a favourable outcome, but I'm not sure if I want the bishop on b5.





## 16...♙xd4

16...♙c5? runs into 17.♙xg7 ♔xg7 18.♚c3† ♔g8 19.b4 ♘a6 20.♚xc7 ♘xc7 21.♙c6 and White wins a pawn.

16...♘b6 does not achieve much after 17.♙b5±.

16...♖fc8 17.♙xd7 ♚xd7 18.♖a5± As usual, the a-pawn is a clear target.

16...a5 17.♙xd7! ♙xd4 (17...♙xd7 18.♘d5 is really unpleasant for Black with the bishop still on d4) 18.♚xd4 ♚xd7 19.♖a4± White continues to exert easy pressure, and the knight is perfectly placed on e3.

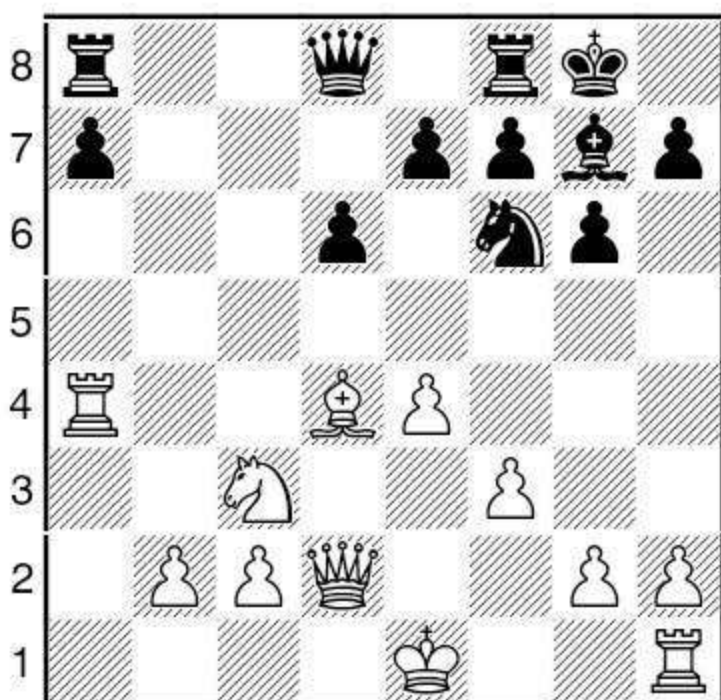
## 17.♚xd4 ♘c5 18.b4

18.f4!? could also be considered – one of the nice things about the e3-knight is that it may support our play on both sides. However, I am not sure if it is useful for us to include f3-f4 and ...f6 before we advance on the queenside.

## 18...♘xa4 19.♖xa4 ♚b6 20.♚xb6 axb6 21.♖fa1 ♖xa4 22.♖xa4±

Even in the endgame, Black's counterplay is restricted by the e3-knight, which seems superior to the bishop.

### A2) 13...♙xa4 14.♖xa4





White's structure is definitely better, but Black's pieces are decently placed. His usual plan involves ...♖b8-b7 and ...♜c8, safeguarding the a7-pawn while preparing ...d5. The onus is on White to find a purposeful plan; merely doubling rooks on the a-file will get nowhere after ...♖b7 and ...a6.

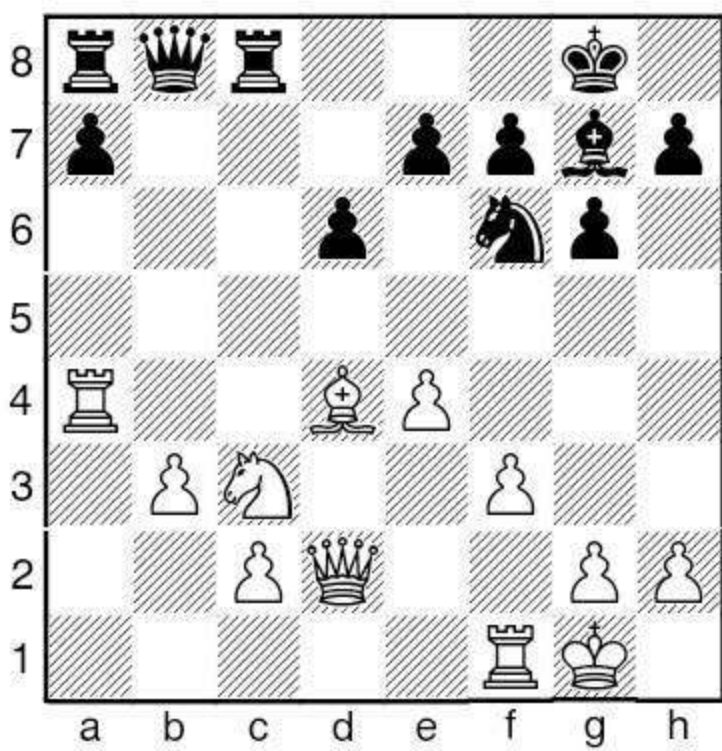
### 14...♖b8

As usual, 14...a5 just weakens the pawn. 15.0-0 ♘d7 16.♙xg7 ♜xg7 17.♖d4† ♜g8 18.♘d5 ♜c8 19.♘e3± As I mentioned earlier, I always want to bring the knight to e3 in these positions – normally via the d1-route, so going via d5 feels even nicer.

### 15.0-0 ♜c8 16.b3

16.♜b1 has been played a few times, but I fail to see the idea behind the ugliness.

I would like if White could manage without moving the b-pawn and just play 16.♘d1, but the problem is that a subsequent ♘e3 would allow the annoying plan of ...e5 followed by ...♙h6. With the pawn on b3, we will have the option of retreating the bishop to b2 or a1 rather than c3. The pawn move also gives us the additional regrouping option of ♘d1-b2-c4.





## 16...♔b7 17.♘d1!?!N

Like I said before, I am obsessed with getting this knight to e3!

The great majority of games from this position have continued with the obvious 17.♗fa1 a6, when White has had trouble achieving anything.

The preparatory 17.♙h1!? is possible, and after 17...e6 18.♘d1 we transpose to 18.♙h1 in the notes to the main line below. The text move is more flexible though.

The text move prepares to regroup our pieces in the best way possible. In an ideal world, we will be able to play ♙h1, ♘e3 and finally ♗fa1, with a dominating position. The knight on c3 can often prove vulnerable, but on e3 it influences the entire board and defends c2 as well. This plan would work perfectly against moves such as ...♘d7, allowing the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

Black does have one source of counterplay against our knight manoeuvre, which was mentioned in the notes to White's 16th move above. Once the knight goes to e3, he can try to annoy us with ...e5 followed by ...♙h6 with an annoying pin. Obviously this could prove positionally horrid for Black if White can keep the tactics at bay, and we might also avoid it with other regroupings like ♘b2-c4, or even just ♘f2 if Black isn't doing anything. Of course we also have to watch out for various ...d5 plans but, as you will see, after exd5 our pawn structure will remain superior – we just need to make sure our pieces remain well placed. Black has an abundance of possible moves here, and I will mention a lot of them briefly to show these ideas in action.

## 17...e6

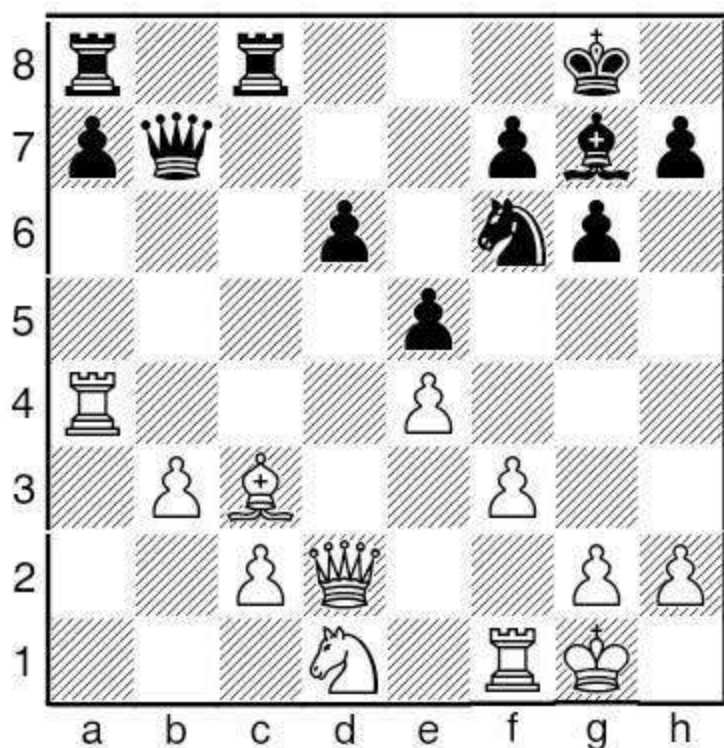
17...♘d7?! 18.♙xg7 ♙xg7 19.♘e3± is perfect for White.

17...a5 18.♘b2! sees the knight switch routes to go after the a5-pawn: 18...♘d7 19.♙xg7 ♙xg7 20.♘c4±



17...a6 18.♔h1!? prepares ♖e3, while asking Black what he intended to accomplish with his last move. (The immediate 18.♖e3 allows 18...e5! 19.♗b2 ♕h6 when the game becomes messy.)

17...e5 could be met by 18.♗a1 intending c2-c4, but I would be tempted to try 18.♗c3!?. The bishop may look awkward here, but it gives us the useful option of ♗a5 after ...♖d8, while ...♘d7 can simply be met by ♙xd6 since c2 won't be hanging.



Black could try 18...d5!? (18...♖c6 19.♘b2±) but after 19.♗xe5 dxe4 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♖xe4 he will have to work to prove any compensation.

17...♙c7 18.♖f2!? This is not my favourite square for the rook, but Black's queen is not well placed either. (18.♖e3 e5 19.♗b2 ♕h6 could be slightly awkward; 18.♖c4 is possible though, and will probably transpose to the next note below.) 18...e6 (18...d5 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.exd5 just drops a pawn; 18...a5 19.♘b2±) Now is the right time for:

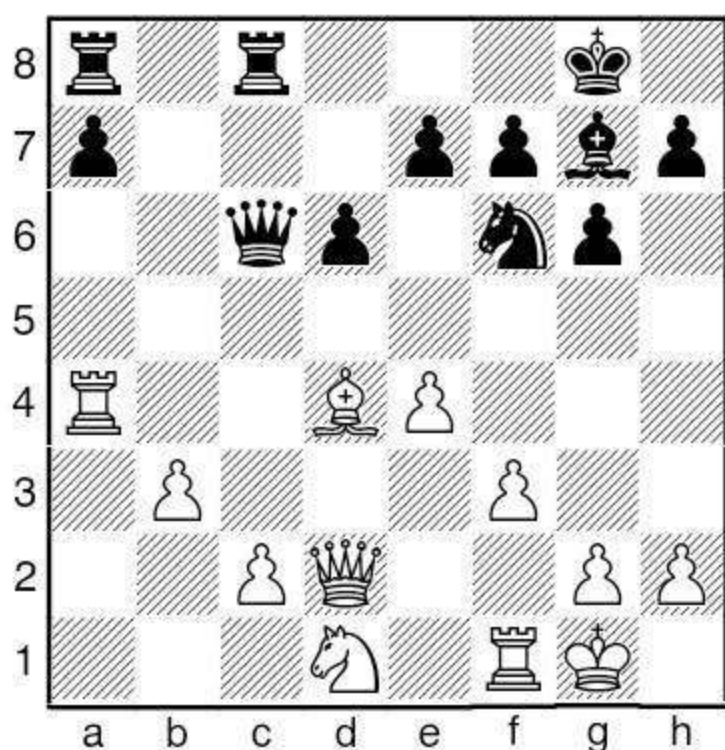




19.♘e3! e5 20.♙b2 ♖h6 Now that the c2-pawn enjoys additional protection, this is not so troublesome. 21.♚e1±

17...♚c6!?

This tricky move is similar to 17...♚c7 above, but this time the queen also supports a quick ...d5. We have a few ways of dealing with this, each of which involves a small concession. Either we play c2-c4 and live with the slight weakening of the b3-pawn, or we exchange a pair of rooks. I slightly prefer the latter option:



18.♖c4

18.♖f2 does not work as well against the queen on c6. 18...e5 19.♙a1 d5 20.♙xe5 dxe4 Black is close to equalizing, since 21.♙xf6? ♙xf6 22.♖xe4 ♖d8 23.♚e1 ♙d4+ wins the exchange for Black.

18.c4!? ♖cb8 (18...♘d7 19.♙xg7 ♙xg7 20.♘e3±;

18...♖ab8 does not change much after 19.♖a3

followed by ♘c3) 19.♖a3 a5 (19...♘d7 20.♘e3) 20.♘c3

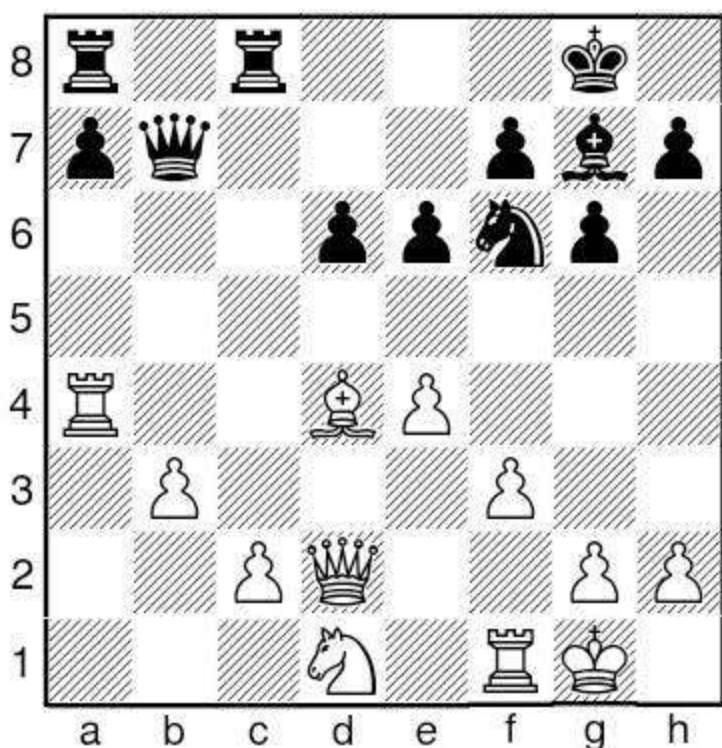
White restrains the ...a4 push and keeps a small plus, although a lot of manoeuvring remains in the future.

18...♔b7 19.♘b2 ♘d7 20.♖xc8† ♖xc8

Exchanging a pair of rooks is not our dream scenario as it leaves us with less firepower to attack the a-pawn. However, the most important thing is that it nullifies Black's activity without weakening our structure.

21.♙xg7 ♔xg7 22.♘c4 ♘e5 23.♘e3±

The show goes on. White keeps the better structure and can continue to exert pressure with one rook.



18.♘f2!?

The knight takes a different route to prepare against ...d5.

18.♔h1

This is the main alternative, preparing to put the knight on e3, as having the king on h1 takes the sting out of the ...e5/...♙h6 plan. However, Black can counter with:

18...d5

18...♔c6 19.♘e3 e5 20.♙xa7! is a safe pawn grab.

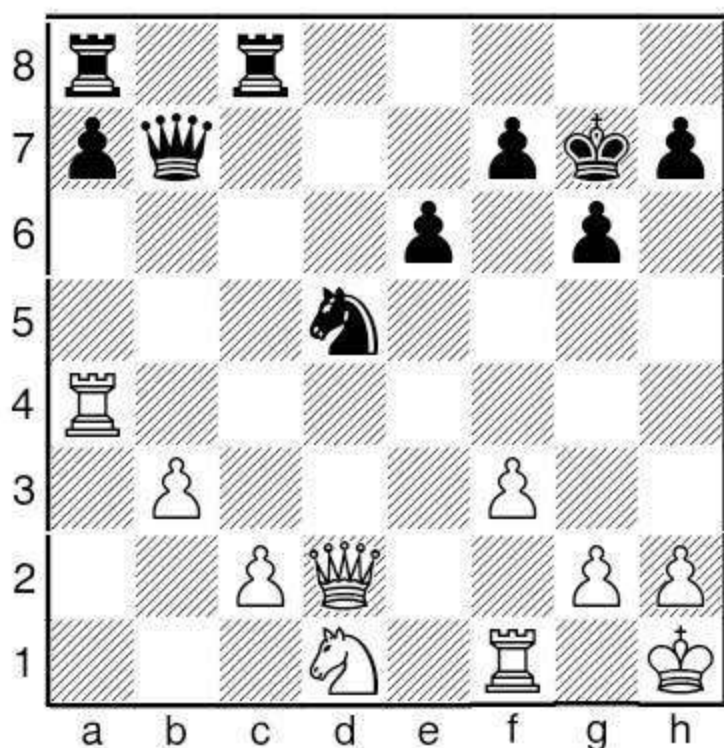
18...♔c7 19.♘e3 (19.c4!?) 19...e5 20.♖c4 ♔d7 21.♙b2 ♙h6 22.♖c3!? seems pleasant for White.

19.exd5 ♘xd5 20.♙xg7 ♔xg7

White can certainly try to exploit his passed c-pawn



and safer king, but it will take a few moves to activate the knight.



21. ♖f2 ♔b6

21...♖d8 gets nowhere after 22.♖d4.

22. ♖e4 ♘e3

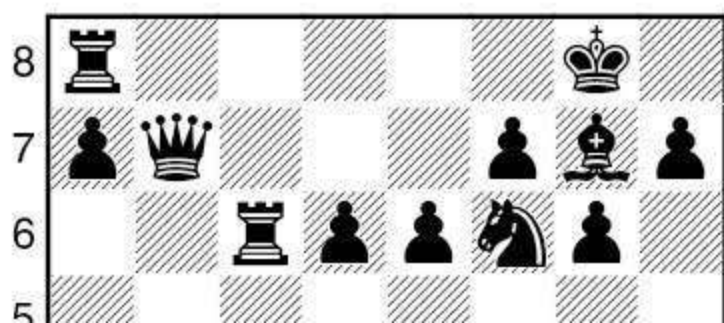
22...♔e3?! 23.♔d1! threatens a check on a1, and after 23...♙g8 24.♖e1 White is in full control.

23. ♖c1±

18...♖c6

18...e5?! 19.♙b2 ♔c6 20.c4 leaves Black's structure permanently weakened.

18...d5?! 19.exd5 ♘xd5 20.♙xg7 ♙xg7 21.♖fa1 gives us a better version of the 18.♔h1 line noted above. White is much better developed, and it is hard for Black to deal with threats like ♔d4† and ♖e4 (or ♘g4).

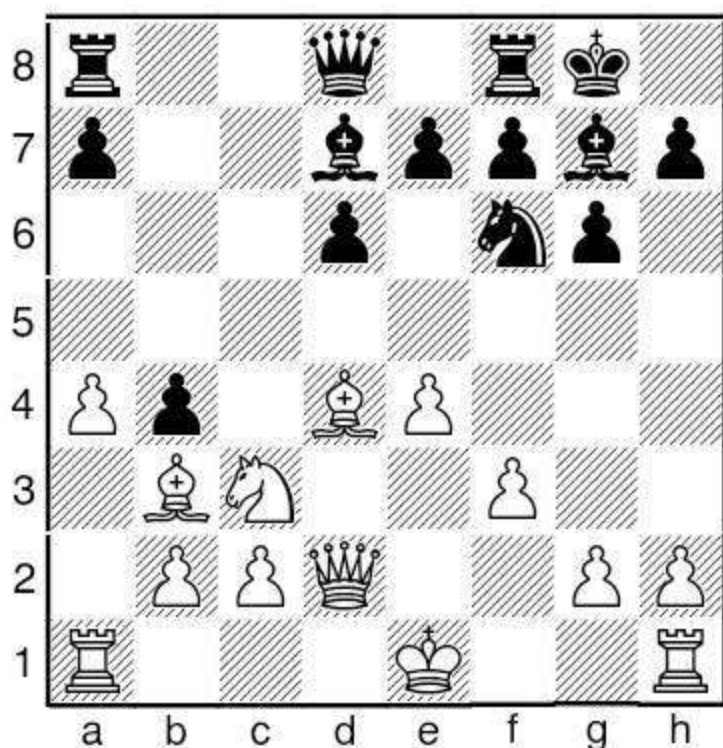




## 19.♟fa1 a6 20.♞1a2!?

It is hard to say how big White's advantage is, but he definitely has the more pleasant position: the a-pawn is a long-term weakness and Black is not in much of a position to strike in the centre with ...e5 or ...d5. The last move overprotects the c2-pawn, anticipating ...♞ac8, although we could also consider meeting that move with c2-c4. The knight on f2 doesn't look ideal, but at least it's no longer a target on c3, and it may go to d3 or even back towards e3 later in the game.

### B) 12...b4



This move used to be considered dubious for Black, but it has experienced a revival due to some correspondence games and the discovery of some long, forcing variations where Black ends up equalizing. Since we found some ways to bother Black after 12...bxa4, it is possible that more over-the-board players will start migrating towards the text move.

## 13.♞d5

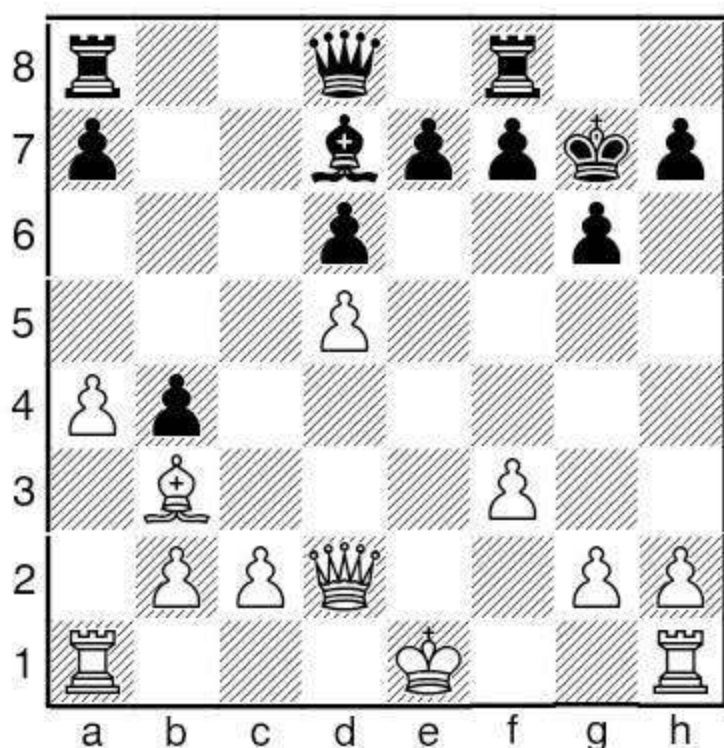
13.♞e2!? intending h2-h4 deserves attention, but I don't see the need to go for such unclear complications unless

absolutely required, so I will just mention it as a fertile area that could be explored. (Remember, this chapter is intended to be the 'positional' option – you can find a more aggressive and complicated approach in the next chapter!)

### 13...♘xd5

From this position we will start by looking at the most popular **B1)** 14.♙xg7, before turning our attention to **B2)** 14.exd5!?

#### B1) 14.♙xg7 ♖xg7 15.exd5



### 15...♔b6!

This move has been the key to Black's revival. The idea is to force us to castle on the queenside, then play ...♔a5 and take the a4-pawn. It looks slow, but White will not quite be in time to cause serious damage on the kingside.

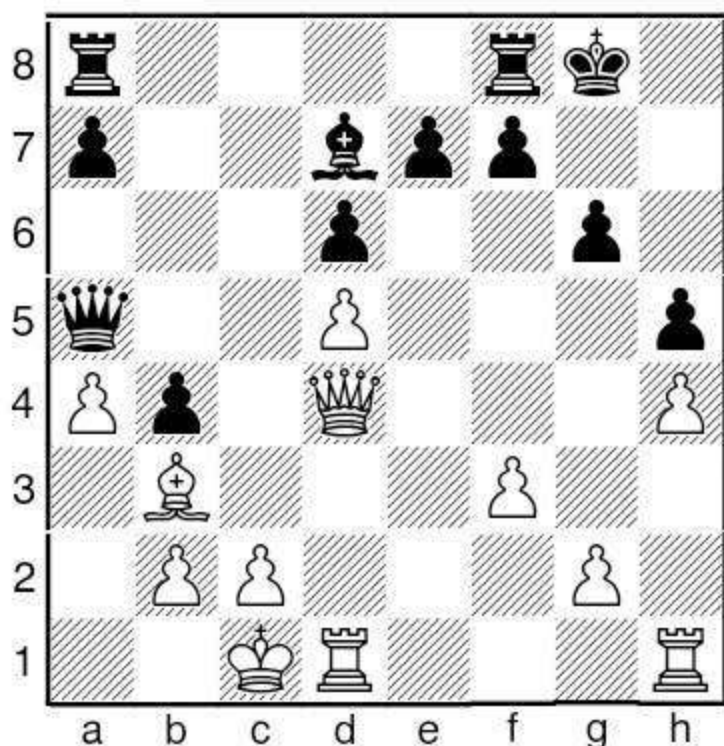
15...a5 is less of a problem: 16.h4 e5 Opening the centre is the only way for Black to deal with the attack. 17.dxe6 ♙xe6 18.0-0-0 ♙xb3 19.cxb3 ♖e8 20.h5 ♗f6





21.h6†! The pawn will be a constant pain for Black, even in the endgame: (21.♔b1 allowed Black to equalize with 21...gxh5! in Anand – Carlsen, Kristiansund 2010) 21...♔f8 22.♔b1 ♖ad8 23.♙f2 ♜e6 24.♞he1 ♜xe1 25.♞xe1 ♜e8 26.♞d1± Ganguly – D.H. Nguyen, Jakarta 2012.

16.h4 h5 17.0-0-0 ♔a5 18.♙d4† ♔g8



19.g4

19.♞c4!? would be interesting were it not for: 19...♞xa4! (19...♞ac8 20.b3 ♙c5 21.♞he1±; 19...♙xa4 20.b3! is also good for White, albeit more complicated – but since the text move equalizes cleanly, I will not devote any more space to this side-note) 20.g4 ♞ac8! 21.gxh5 ♙c5= White is forced to go into an equal endgame.

19...♞xa4 20.♔b1

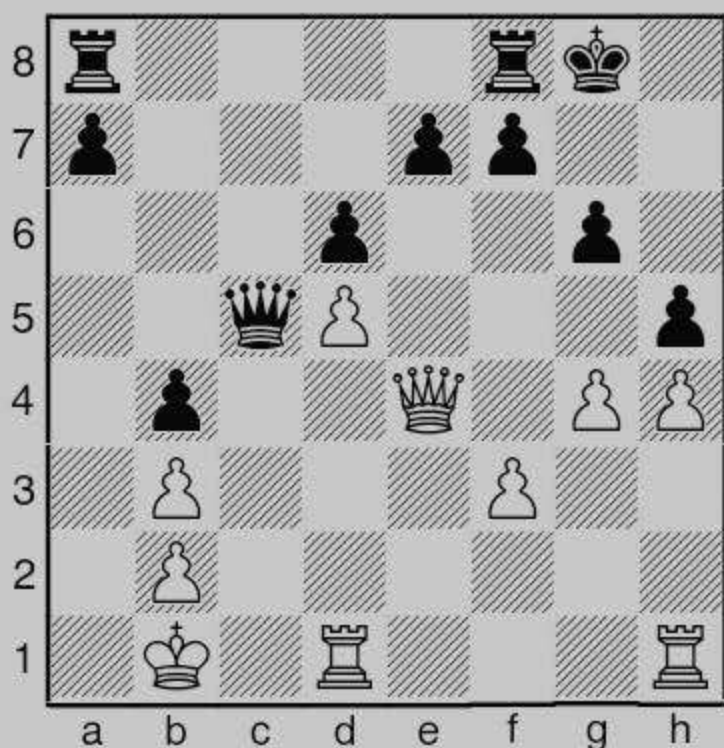
20.♞xa4 ♙xa4 21.♔b1 ♞fc8 22.b3 ♙d7 23.♞d3 a5 24.gxh5 a4 is another seemingly exciting line which the computer has reduced to '0.00':





25.hxg6 ♔c7 26.gxf7† ♕xf7 27.♖h2 axb3 28.♖xb3 ♕a5=  
Cvetnic – Walter, email 2012.

20...♗xb3 21.cxb3 ♕c5 22.♕e4



22...a5!

This leads to another insane-looking but ultimately equal variation.

23.gxh5 a4 24.♖hg1 axb3 25.hxg6 ♖ac8!

This would require strong nerves in an over-the-board game.

25...♕c2†?! is more natural, but after 26.♕xc2 ♖a1† 27.♔xa1 bxc2 28.gxf7† ♕xf7 29.♔a2 cxd1=♕ 30.♖xd1 Black was struggling and eventually went down in Soumya – Bollengier, Istanbul (ol) 2012.



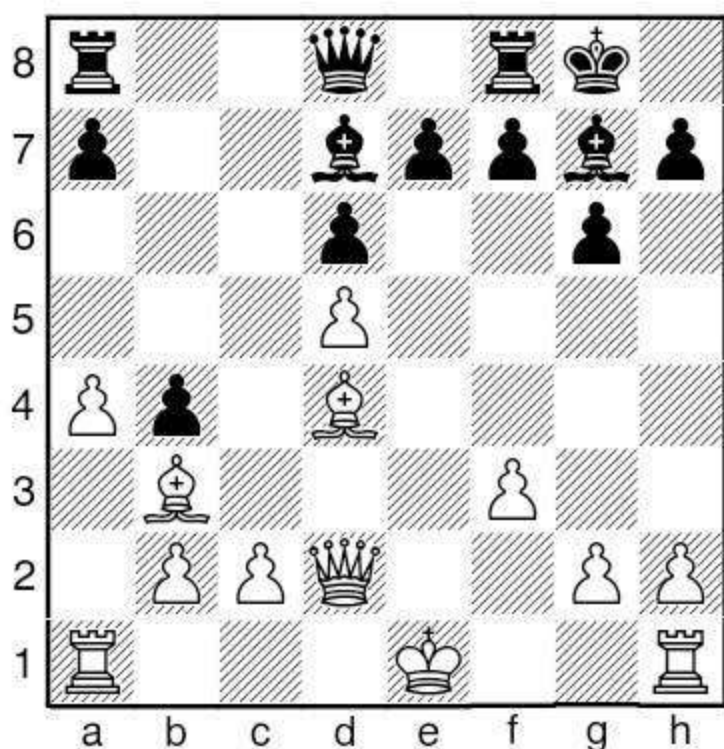
**26.gxf7†**

A draw was agreed here in Ljubicic – Fleetwood, corr. 2014. A likely continuation is:

**26...♔h8 27.♔d4† ♚xd4 28.♖xd4 ♜xf7**

With a drawish endgame.

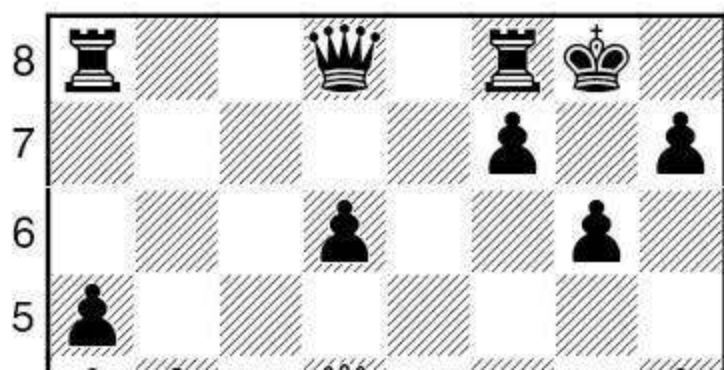
### B2) 14.exd5!?



By keeping a piece on d4, White avoids the ...♚b6 plan. The drawback is that White misses out on the chance to lure the black king to the more exposed g7-square.

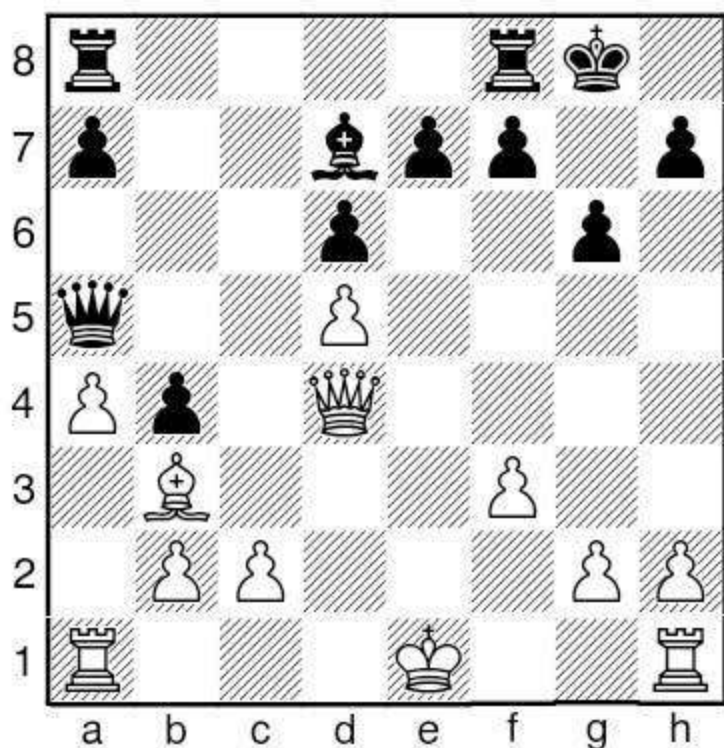
**14...♞xd4 15.♔xd4 ♔a5**

15...a5 is less challenging, and after 16.h4 e5 17.dxe6 ♞xe6 18.0-0-0 ♞xb3 19.cxb3 we reach a typical structure which tends to favour White:





19...♖e8 (19...♔c7† 20.♔b1 ♖fe8 21.h5±) 20.♔b1! In Berg – Smerdon, Liverpool 2007, White was ready to hide his king on a2 and then continue exerting pressure – not only on the kingside, but also against the weak pawns on d6 and a5. Black certainly has defensive chances, but it will be a one-sided battle.



From here we have two options: following a Navara game with **B21)** 16.h4, or trying the relatively unexplored **B22)** 16.♔f2!?. In both cases, the assessment remains similar: Black can get close to equality, but White is the only one trying to win.

### **B21) 16.h4 e5**

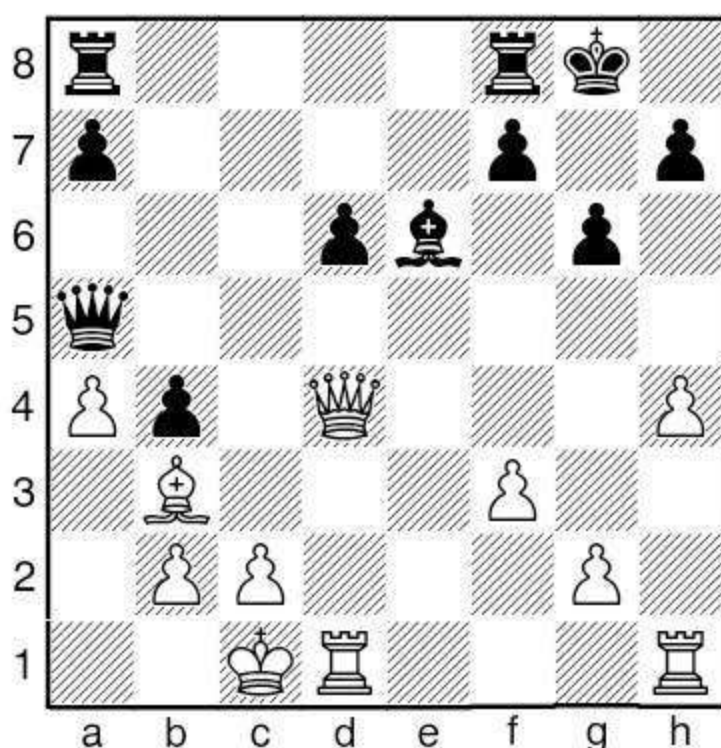
16...h5 17.g4 e5 18.dxe6 ♗xe6 19.0-0-0 gives White good attacking chances.

16...♖ac8 17.h5 ♗f5 (17...g5!?N might deserve more attention, but White can still exert some pressure with 18.h6 f6 19.♔e4 ♖f7 20.f4 and 0-0) 18.♔d2 gxh5 19.♖xh5 ♗g6 20.♖h4 ♔b6 The position resembles several of the lines in Chapter 3, but this is an easier version for White:



21.♔f1 a5 22.♖e1 ♜c7 23.♙c4 ♚h8 24.b3± Bindrich – Popov, Kirishi 2007. Black has no real counterplay and White can continue patiently improving his position.

17.dxe6 ♙xe6 18.0-0-0



18...♙xb3

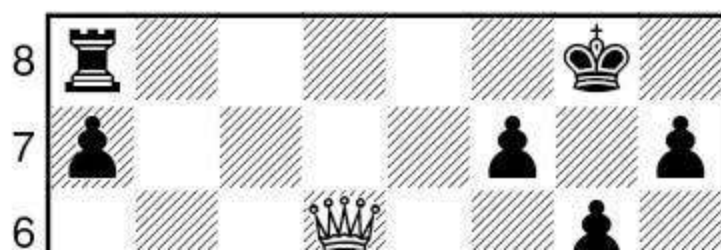
18...♜fe8 19.♔b1 should transpose to the same thing.

19.cxb3 ♜fe8 20.♔b1!

We have already encountered this type of position. The structure should generally favour White, but this time Black can try to make use of his temporary activity.

20...♜e2 21.♙xd6 ♜f5† 22.♔a2 ♜xg2

22...♙c2 23.♖b1 ♙d2 leads to a different structure with the same general assessment: Black has decent defensive chances, but I doubt that many players would willingly aim for such a position.

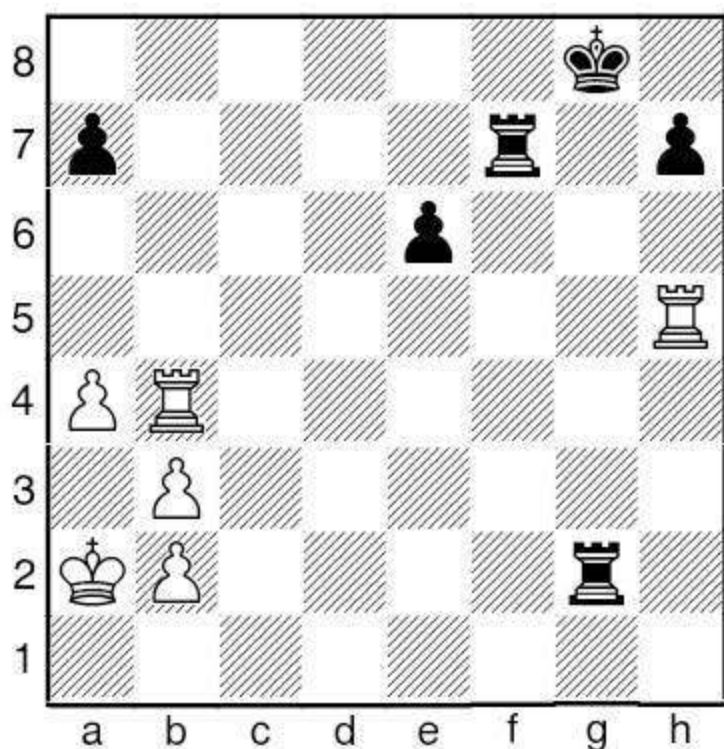


## 23.h5 gxh5

23...a5? 24.h6! would be highly unpleasant.

23...♙xf3 24.hxg6 (24.h6 allows Black to force a draw with 24...♖xb2†!) forces 24...♖xg6 when Black's king has been badly weakened. (Note that 24...♖xb2†? does not work here because 25.♔a1! wins.)

24.♖d5 ♔e6 25.♙xe6 fxe6 26.♖b5 ♖f8 27.♖hxh5 ♖xf3  
28.♖xb4 ♖f7



29.♖e4! ♖ff2 30.♖xe6 ♖xb2† 31.♔a3±

Despite the limited material, White went on to win in Navara – Malakhov, Sibenik 2009. I am quite convinced that careful analysis will show a path to a draw for Black in this variation, but I will leave that task for Black players to worry about. It is certainly no fun defending such a position.

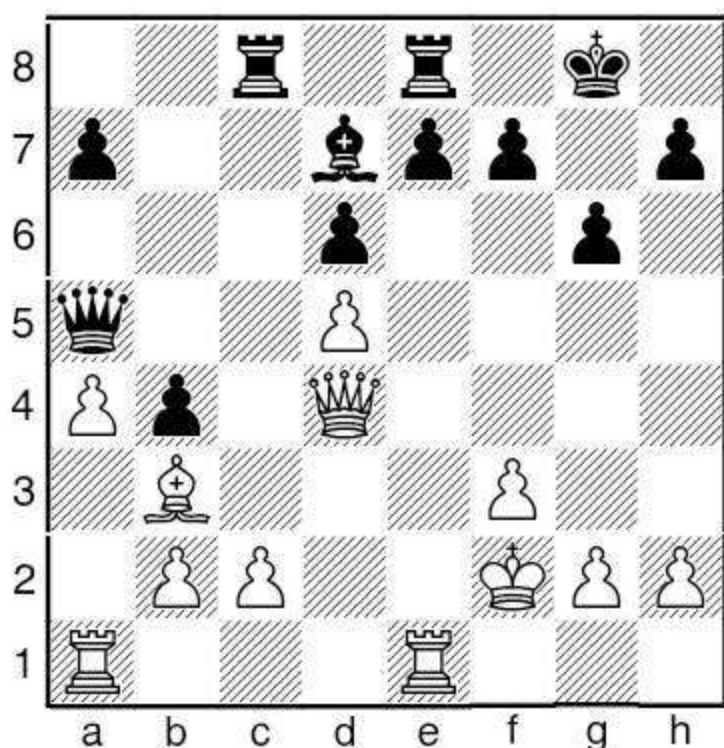
## B22) 16.♔f2!?

This has been a rare choice and it looks a little strange, but it's essentially the same idea as 16.0-0, a move which has been played by Anand among others. The king is not really



exposed on f2 and, in the likely event that Black goes for a queen exchange, it may prove useful having the king nearer the centre.

**16...♖ac8 17.♖he1 ♖fe8**



**18.♖ad1!?N**

18.♖e2 ♖c5 19.♖d1 h5 20.h3 a5 21.♖xc5 ♖xc5 22.♖d4 ♔g7 was fine for Black in Bajarani – Istratescu, Abu Dhabi 2013.

In view of the above, my idea is to prepare against ...♖c5, which I plan to meet with the surprising a4-a5, preventing Black from consolidating by playing ...a5 himself. Of course Black has loads of other options that don't really change the position, but White has some other useful moves available, such as ♖e2 and possibly even g2-g3 (or g4) and ♔g2 if Black does nothing at all.

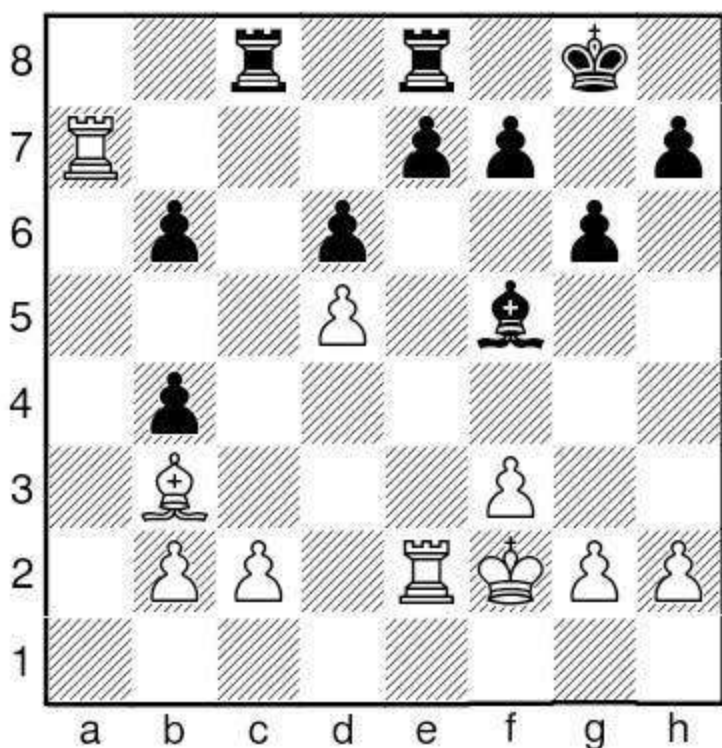
**18...♖c7!**

This subtle way of preparing ...♖c5 should enable Black to hold the balance.

The immediate 18...♖c5?! allows: 19.a5! ♖xa5 20.♖a1 ♖b6 (20...♖c5 21.♖xc5 dxc5 22.♖xa7±) 21.♖xb6 axb6 22.♖a7 ♕f5

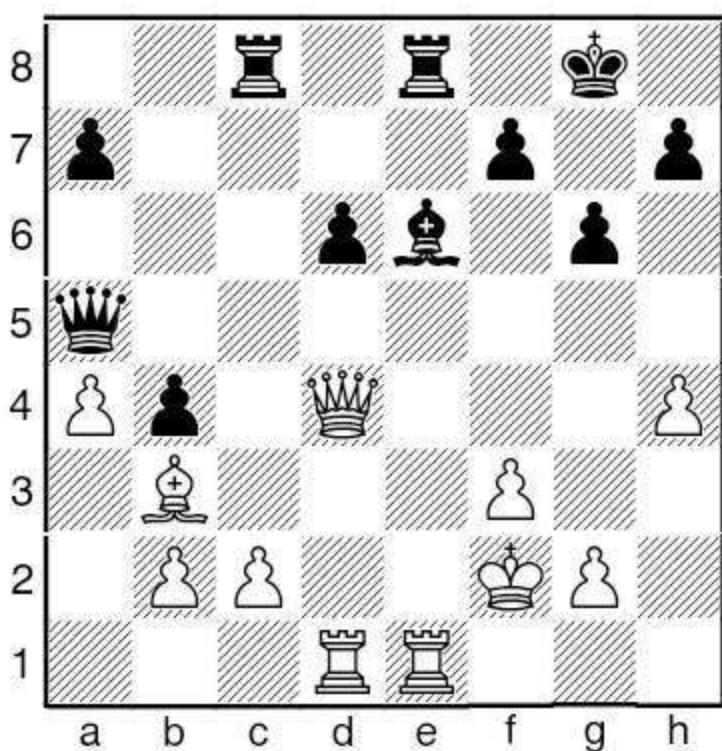


23.♖e2



White threatens to trap the bishop with g2-g4, so Black has to play something like 23...h5, after which 24.♖b7± prepares to collect some pawns on the queenside.

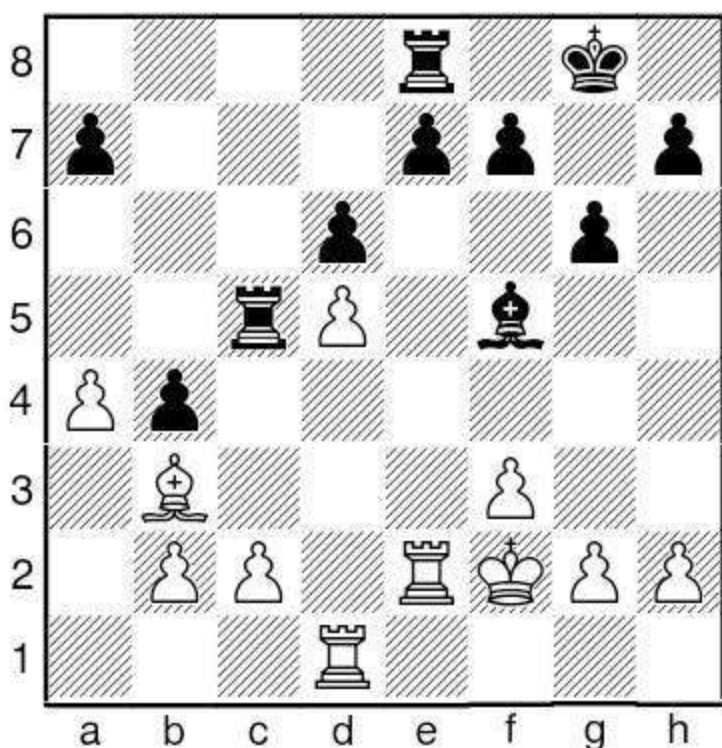
18...e5 19.dxe6 ♗xe6 20.h4!? seems pleasant for White, for instance:



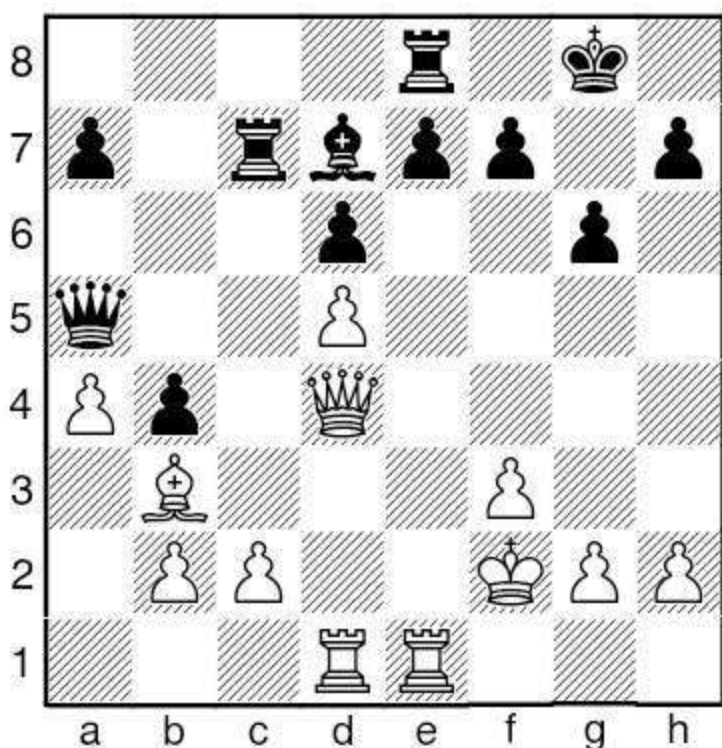
20...♗xb3 21.♖xe8† ♖xe8 22.cxb3 Even with our king on the

opposite side of the board from the usual b1-a2 shelter, Black is still struggling to equalize as his pawns are vulnerable.

Finally, 18...♖f5 19.♖e2 ♔c5 20.♔xc5 ♜xc5 allows another version of our pawn sacrifice:



21.a5! ♜xa5 22.♖d4 White will keep some pressure after picking up the b4-pawn. The bishop is not so well placed on f5, as White can choose a convenient moment to chase it away with g2-g4.





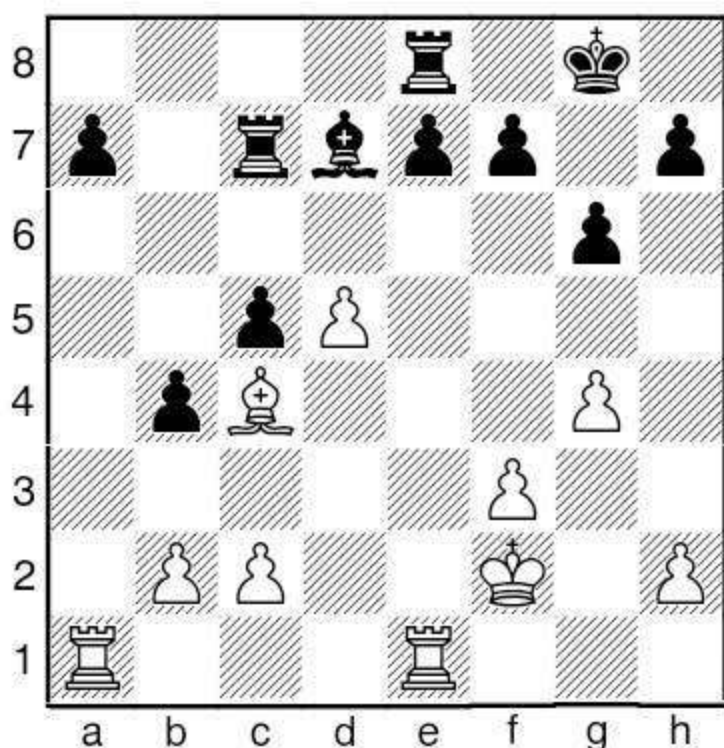
### 19.g4!? ♔c5 20.a5!?

Even with the a7-pawn defended, this is an interesting way to put pressure on Black.

20.♔xc5 ♖xc5 21.a5 ♖xa5 22.♖d4 ♖b5 23.♙a4 ♖b7 24.♙xd7 ♖xd7 25.♖xb4 looks slightly more comfortable for White, but Black should be able to hold the endgame without too much suffering.

### 20...♖xa5 21.♖a1 ♔c5 22.♔xc5 dxc5 23.♙c4

White has good positional compensation and Black still has to work quite hard to draw.



### 23...♙f8!

23...♙g7 24.♖a6 e6 (24...♙c8 25.♖c6 ♖xc6 26.dxc6 is unpleasant for Black) 25.d6 ♖b7 26.♖d1=

### 24.♖a6 ♙c8 25.♖c6 ♖xc6 26.dxc6 ♖d8

The e7-pawn is defended, showing why it was important for the black king to go to f8 a few moves ago. The active rook gives Black just enough counterplay to force a draw.

### 27.♖e5 ♖d2† 28.♙e3 ♖xc2 29.♙d3 ♖f2!

29...♖xb2? would put Black in trouble after 30.♖d5!.



### 30. ♖e3 ♜c2=

The game might end in a strange repetition. White had a few alternatives along the way, but I found no advantage – still, there may well be further subtleties waiting to be discovered.

## Conclusion

10. ♖d2 is the first of two options I am covering from the 9... ♙d7 tabiya, and the resulting positions tend to demand positional awareness more than theoretical knowledge – although knowing a few precise lines will certainly improve your chances. After the standard continuation of 10... ♜xd4 11. ♙xd4 b5 12. a4, there are two continuations, leading to fundamentally differing structures and plans.

12... bxa4 13. ♙xa4 results in an open queenside, so White hardly ever castles on that side. Instead he will play 0-0 and aim for queenside pressure. Black can either preserve the light-squared bishops or exchange them, but in either case I am extremely keen on the plan of manoeuvring the knight from c3 to e3, shifting that piece from a vulnerable position to one where it influences the entire board. Generally White keeps a nice positional edge, although you still need to pay attention to what Black is doing.

12... b4 is the other main line. This time Black blocks the queenside and avoids leaving himself with a weak a-pawn, but he gives us the option of castling on the queenside and playing for an attack. After 13. ♜d5 ♜xd5 we covered two options. 14. ♙xg7 ♙xg7 15. exd5 has been the most popular continuation, and it certainly deserves consideration. At correspondence level the critical lines have been worked out to a draw (or at least a drawn endgame), but in a practical game you could happily follow this path and pose serious problems to all but the best-prepared opponents. If you want to take the game in a different direction, 14. exd5!? is a good choice. Then after 14... ♙xd4 15. ♖xd4 ♙a5 you can



## Conclusion

10.♔d2 is the first of two options I am covering from the 9...♙d7 tabiya, and the resulting positions tend to demand positional awareness more than theoretical knowledge – although knowing a few precise lines will certainly improve your chances. After the standard continuation of 10...♗xd4 11.♙xd4 b5 12.a4, there are two continuations, leading to fundamentally differing structures and plans.

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12...b4 is the other main line. This time Black blocks the queenside and avoids leaving himself with a weak a-pawn, but he gives us the option of castling on the queenside and playing for an attack. After 13.♘d5 ♗xd5 we covered two options. 14.♙xg7 ♔xg7 15.exd5 has been the most popular continuation, and it certainly deserves consideration. At correspondence level the critical lines have been worked out to a draw (or at least a drawn endgame), but in a practical game you could happily follow this path and pose serious problems to all but the best-prepared opponents. If you want to take the game in a different direction, 14.exd5!? is a good choice. Then after 14...♙xd4 15.♔xd4 ♔a5 you can either follow the Navara game with 16.h4 or try for a favourable endgame with 16.♔f2!?, when the a4-a5 pawn sacrifice poses unusual problems to the defender. In all cases I feel White will have good practical chances of success.



# Chapter 11

## Accelerated Dragon



9...Qd7 10.h4!?

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 g6 5.Qc3 Qg7  
6.Qe3 Qf6 7.Qc4 0-0 8.Qb3 d6 9.f3 Qd7

10.h4!?

A) 10...Qxd4 11.Qxd4 b5 12.h5

A1) 12...e6

A2) 12...a5 13.hxg6 hxg6 14.Qd5! Qxd5 15.Qxd5  
Rc8 16.a3!

A21) 16...Qc7!?N

A22) 16...e6

B) 10...h5 11.Qd2

B1) 11...Qe5!?

B2) 11...Rc8 12.Qxc6!? bxc6 13.g4!

B21) 13...hxg4?!

B22) 13...c5!N 14.Qc4!

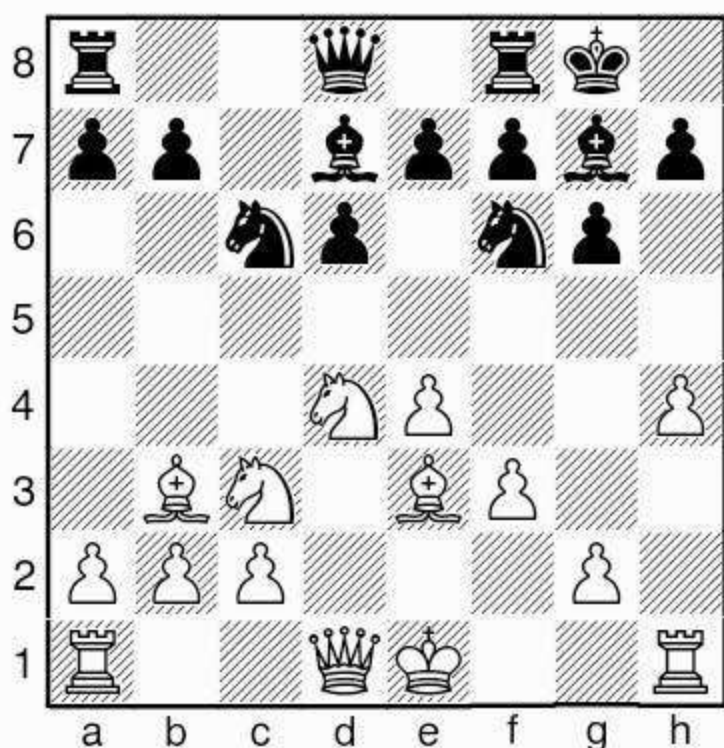
B221) 14...Rb8

B222) 14...Qb6!? 15.e5!? dxe5  
16.g5 Qe8

B2221) 17.Qd5

B2222) 17.Qxd7

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6  
7.♗c4 0-0 8.♗b3 d6 9.f3 ♗d7 10.h4!?



This is a more aggressive approach than the one covered in the previous chapter, and it can lead to completely insane complications – a great challenge for White, but I think even more so for Black. Pushing the h-pawn is my favourite continuation in terms of being most in the spirit of the Yugoslav Attack, although we must take care to tiptoe around some unwanted transpositions to certain Dragon variations which fall outside our repertoire.

Black has two main ways to meet the text move: **A) 10...♘xd4** and **B) 10...h5**.

**A) 10...♘xd4 11.♗xd4 b5**

Black could also try:

11...a5 12.a4 ♗e6

This is Black's only serious attempt to justify the loss of flexibility that his previous move entailed.

13.♗xe6!?

Allowing the structure with cxb3 could be interesting to explore further, but I am happy with White's position after the exchange



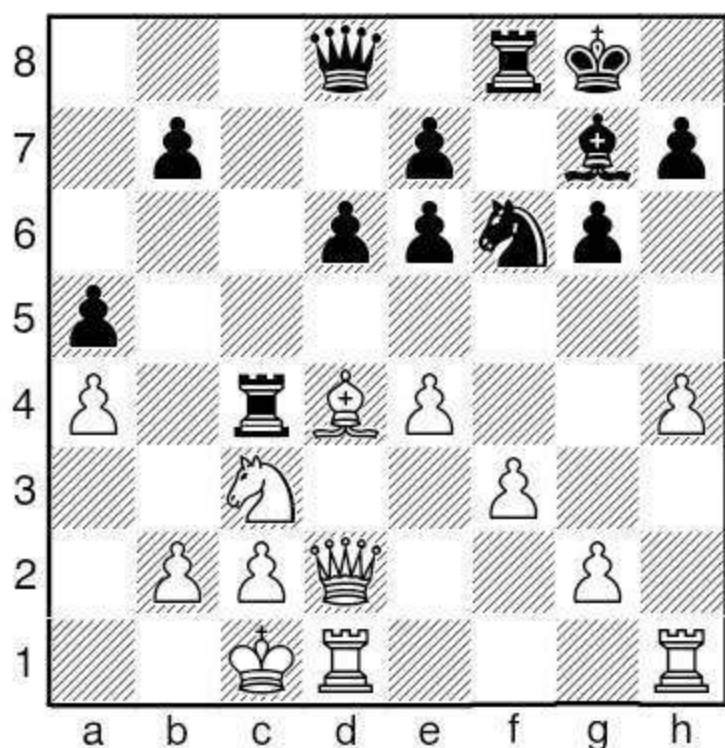
on e6.

13...fxe6 14.♔d2 ♖c8

14...♘h5 15.0-0-0 15...♖c8 16.♙xg7 ♔xg7 17.e5 d5  
18.♘b5± looks great for White.

15.0-0-0 ♖c4!?

Again, this is the only real way to exploit the pawn on a4.



16.h5!

The main thing for White is not to fear any knight jumps.

16...♘xh5

16...♖xd4? 17.♔xd4 ♘xh5 18.♔c4± was just bad for Black in Fier – Matsuura, Curitiba 2010.

16...♘xe4 is critical, but it turns out well for White:

17.♔e2 ♖xd4 18.♖xd4 ♙xd4 19.♔xe4 ♙xc3 20.♔xe6†

♔g7 21.h6† ♔h8 22.bxc3 The pawn on h6 is a permanent annoyance for Black; I found a Stockfish – Stockfish engine game in 2014, in which White eventually prevailed.

17.♙xg7 ♔xg7 18.g4 ♘f4 19.♔h2 h5 20.gxh5 ♘xh5

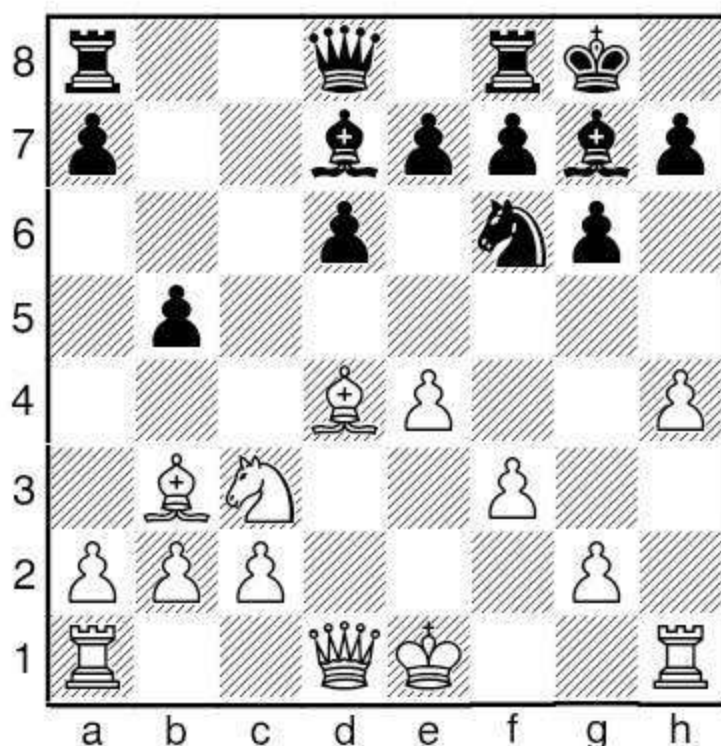


21.♖dg1!N

21.♔g2 ♖c5 22.♗h4 ♔f7 23.f4 ♕c8 allowed Black to escape in Almeida – Voll, corr. 2006.

21...♖c5 22.f4!→

Black's position is unpleasant, since 22...♖xf4 runs into 23.♘d5!.

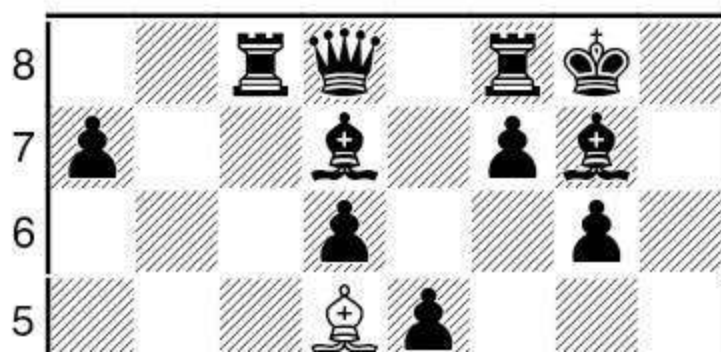


Many Accelerated Dragon players will be attracted to this familiar plan, but the quick advance of the h-pawn poses him different problems than the main 10.♔d2 line.

## 12.h5

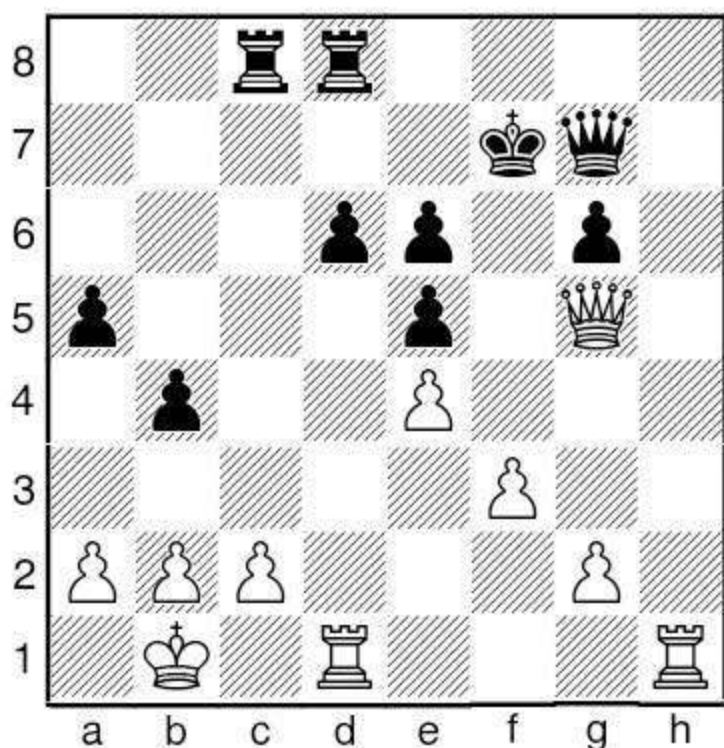
Black's most logical tries are **A1)** 12...e6 and **A2)** 12...a5. 12...♘xh5? 13.♕xg7 ♔xg7 14.♔d2 was dreadful for Black in Kontic – Todorovic, Cetinje 1992.

12...e5 is positionally dubious: 13.♕e3 b4 14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♖c8 16.hxg6 hxg6



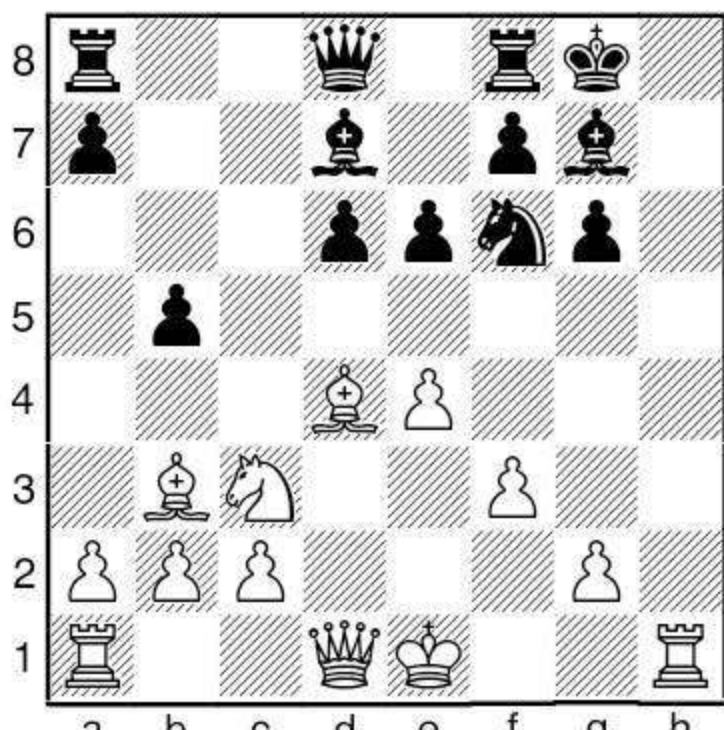


17. ♔d2 ♕e6 18.0-0-0 ♖c7 19. ♗xe6 fxe6 20. ♔b1 This central structure is usually pleasant for White – see, for instance, variation A3 of Chapter 21. Obviously king safety is much more of an issue in the present line, and I will present a full game in order to show White's ideas: 20...a5 21. ♗h6 ♖fd8 22. ♗xg7 ♖xg7 23. ♗g5 ♔f7



24.f4! exf4 25. ♗xf4† ♔e7 26. ♗g5† ♔e8 27. ♗xa5+– Black soon resigned in Ponomariov – De la Riva Aguado, Andorra 2003.

### A1) 12...e6 13.hxg6 hxg6



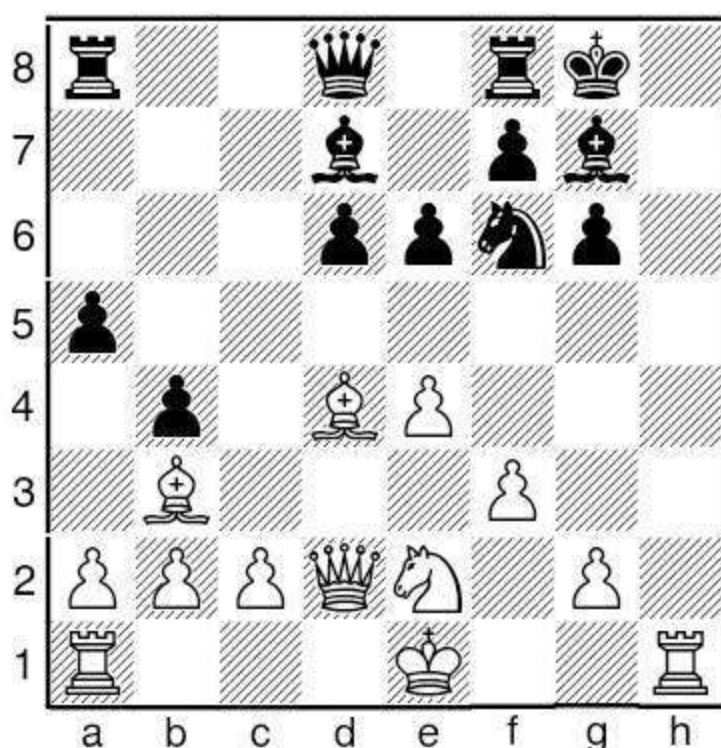
## 14. ♔d2

14.a4!? is also interesting: 14...bxa4 (14...b4 15. ♘e2 ♙c6±) 15. ♘xa4!± Compared with variation A of the previous chapter, the fact that Black has committed himself to ...e6 prevents him from playing ...♙e6. However, it looks even better to develop the queen first.

## 14...a5

14...b4 15. ♘e2 a5

Nobody has tried this yet, but it makes sense to consider it.



## 16.g4!

It turns out that White can ignore the queenside and get a powerful attack.

16... ♔c7

16...a4 17. ♙c4±

17. ♘f4! a4

17...e5? and 17...d5? are both met by 18.g5 with a crushing attack.

18. ♔h2 ♖fc8



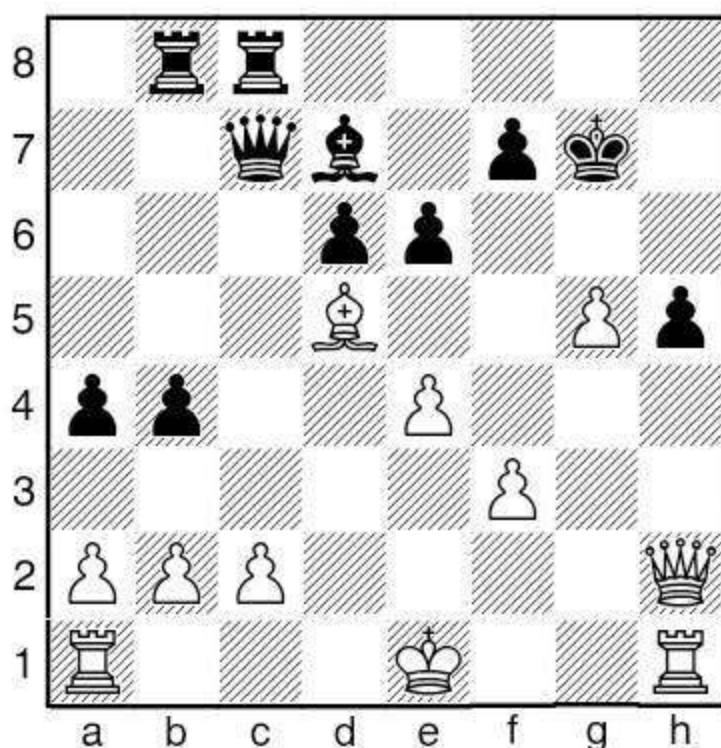


19.♙d5! ♖ab8!

19...exd5 20.♘xd5 ♔d8 (or 20...♘xd5 21.♚h8†!)

21.♘xf6† ♙xf6 22.♚h8†! ♙xh8 23.♖xh8# is a neat finish.

20.g5 ♘h5 21.♙xg7 ♔xg7 22.♘xh5† gxh5



23.♚f4! ♔g8

23...♔d8 24.♖xh5 exd5 25.♚h4 ♔g8 26.g6+-

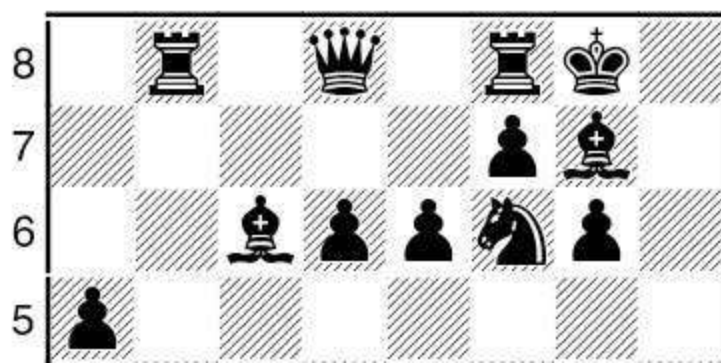
24.g6! fxg6 25.♚h6 ♔f7 26.e5!→

With correct play, White's initiative should decide the game.

## 15.a4

This time we are forced to take time out on the queenside, but it does not trouble us too much.

15...bxa4 16.♘xa4 ♙c6 17.0-0-0 ♖b8



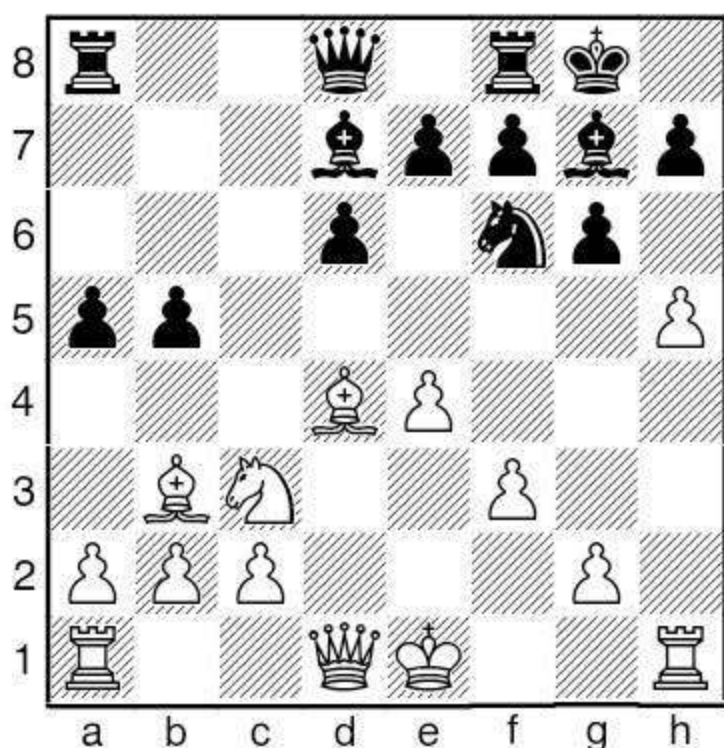
## 18.g4!N

18.♘c3 favoured White in Kozlov – Lunev, Kosaja Gora 2014, but the text move is even stronger.

18...♖b4 19.♘c5 ♖xa4 20.♘xa4 ♘xa4 21.♘xd6 ♖e8 22.♔h2±

With the nasty threat of e4-e5.

## A2) 12...a5



## 13.hxg6

13.♘d5 gives Black the option of 13...e6!? 14.♘b6 ♔b8 when there is no mate with ♘e7! That's why I prefer to open the h-file first.

## 13...hxg6 14.♘d5!

I am less impressed by:

14.a4 bxa4!

14...b4? 15.♘d5 ♘xd5 16.exd5!N is a dream position for White, for instance: 16...♔c7 17.♘xg7 ♔xg7

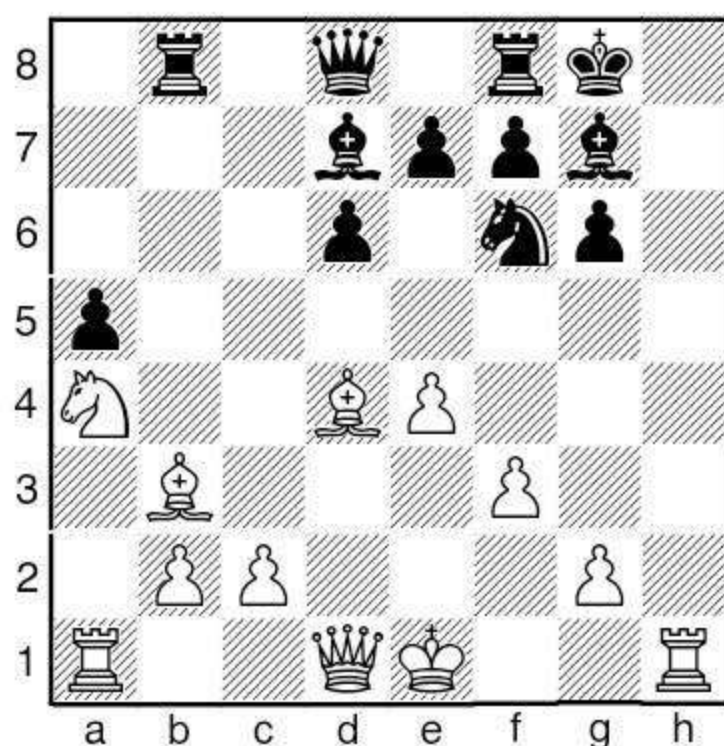
18.♔d4† f6 19.♔e3+–

15.♘xa4 ♖b8

Despite the open h-file, it is hard for White to generate a serious attack. The g7-bishop defends



things perfectly, while the open queenside provides Black with ample opportunities for counterplay.



16. ♔d2

16. ♘c3 e5!? (16... ♙e6 17. ♘d5 ♙xd5 18. exd5±) 17. ♙e3  
 ♙e6 is also rather unclear.

16... ♙e6! 17. ♙xe6 fxe6 18. b3 ♔c7∞

Areshchenko – Maciejka, Germany 2009.

14... ♘xd5

With the h-file open, 14... e6? loses to 15. ♙b6!.

14... a4 15. ♘xf6† exf6 16. ♙d5 ♖c8 17. ♔d2± Martin –  
 Kupreichik, Barcelona 1984.

14... ♙e6 15. a4!?N (15. ♘xf6† is also strong of course)  
 15... ♙xd5 16. exd5 b4 17. ♔d2±

15. ♙xd5 ♖c8 16. a3!

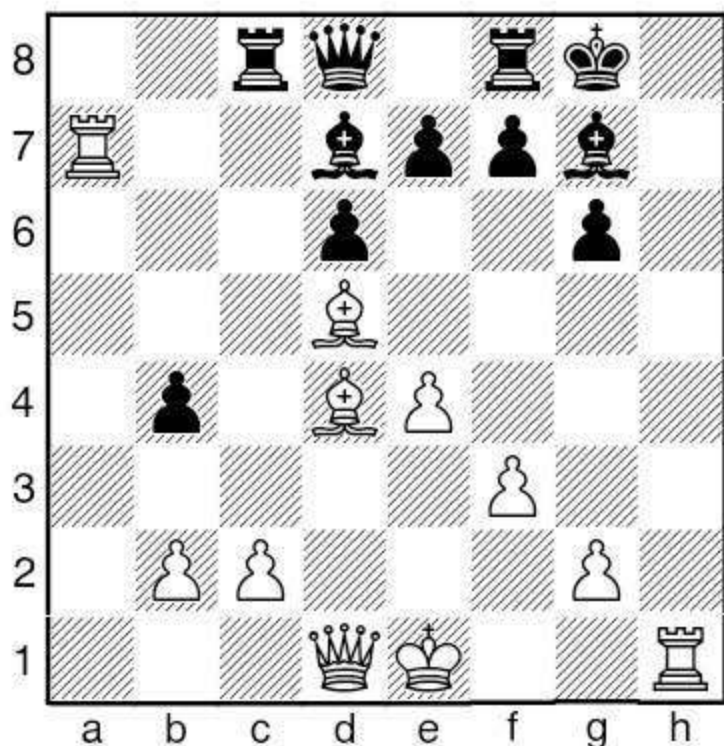
Black's idea was to meet 16. ♔d2 with 16... ♖xc2! 17. ♔xc2  
 ♙xd4∞ as in Shirov – Cifuentes Parada, Barcelona 2000.

I also considered 16. c3, but 16... b4N gives Black reasonable  
 counterplay.

The text move is almost a novelty, although the idea itself is simple – White just creates a square for the bishop on a2. We need to back it up with some tactics though. Black's most important replies are **A21) 16...♔c7!?N** and **A22) 16...e6**.

**16...♘c6 17.♘b3±** With the c8-rook blocked, Black doesn't have much to do.

**16...b4** just opens the a-file for us. **17.axb4 axb4 18.♖a7!?**



**18...e5 (18...♘c6 19.♘b3 ♖a8 20.♖xa8 ♔xa8 21.♔f2 ♔a5 22.♔d2 ♘xd4† 23.♔xd4 ♔e5 24.♔xb4±) 19.♘e3 ♘e6 20.♘xe6 fxe6 21.♔d2 ♖f7 22.♖a6±**

### **A21)16...♔c7!?N 17.c3**

I also considered the blunt **17.♔d2!? ♔xc2 18.♔g5 e6 19.♘f6 (19.♔h4 f6!) which looks dangerous, but Black has the amazing defence 19...♔c5! (but not 19...exd5 20.♔h6!! ♘xh6 21.♖xh6+–) intending 20.♔h6 ♔e3† with a draw. There are a few more details, but with accurate play Black defends.**

After the text move it is not obvious what Black should be doing.



## 17...e6

17...♙c6 18.♙b3! (18.♚d2 ♙xd5 19.♙xg7 ♚xg7 20.♚h6† ♚f6∞) 18...♖fd8 19.♚d2 e5 (19...d5 20.♙xg7) 20.♙e3± Black has no real counterplay in sight and he must worry about ideas like ♙h6 or ♚f2-h4.

## 18.♙b3

18.♙xg7 ♚xg7 19.♚d4† e5 20.♚d2 ♖h8 21.0-0-0 b4↗ is not clear at all.

## 18...d5!?

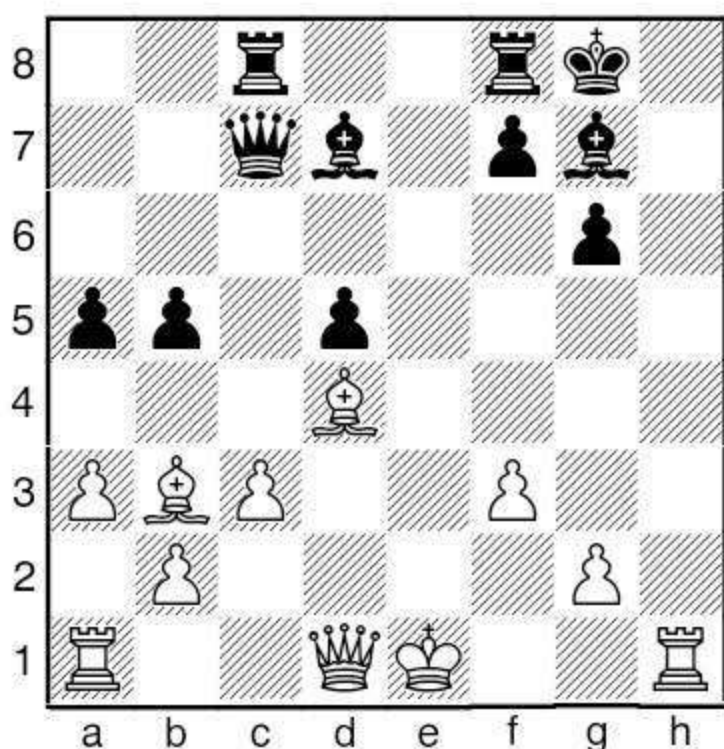
This seems like the best attempt to cause problems.

18...e5 19.♙e3 ♙e6 20.♙xe6 fxe6 21.♚d2± gives us a nice structure, and Black's queenside counterplay isn't really scary because we don't even have to castle on that side.

## 19.exd5 exd5

19...♚g3† 20.♚f1±

19...e5!? 20.♙e3 ♚d6 21.♚d2 ♖fe8 is the kind of positional sacrifice that sometimes works well in practice, but White can keep a clear advantage: 22.0-0! (22.♙h6 e4 23.♙xg7 exf3† 24.♚f1 ♚xg7 25.♚h6† f6 26.♚h4† ♚g7 is only a draw) 22...f5 23.a4 e4 24.f4±



20. ♖xg7 ♜fe8†

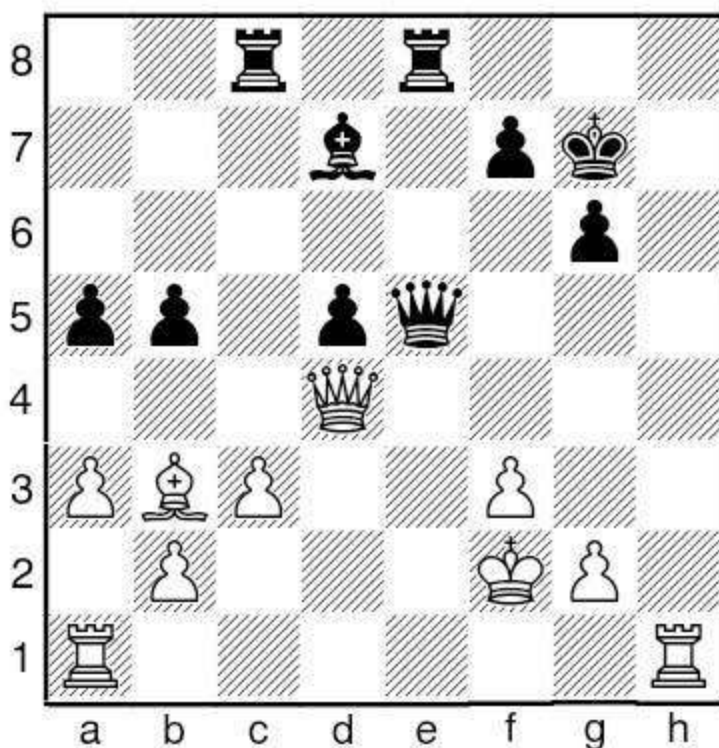
20... ♔xg7 21. ♕d4† f6 22. 0-0-0±

21. ♖f2!

After 21. ♖f1 ♔xg7 22. ♕xd5 ♜f5! Black can hold the balance.

21... ♔xg7 22. ♕d4† ♜e5

22... f6 23. ♜xd5 is a safe extra pawn.



23. ♕d2!

Nicely diverting the black rook.

23... ♜h8

23... ♜e6 24. ♜ae1±

24. ♜xh8 ♜xh8 25. ♕xd5 ♜xd5 26. ♜xd5

White has excellent chances to convert his extra pawn.

A22) 16... e6





This natural try, planning ...♔g5, was played in the only game with 16.a3!.

**17.♖xg7**

17.♖b3? ♔g5!± would be unpleasant.

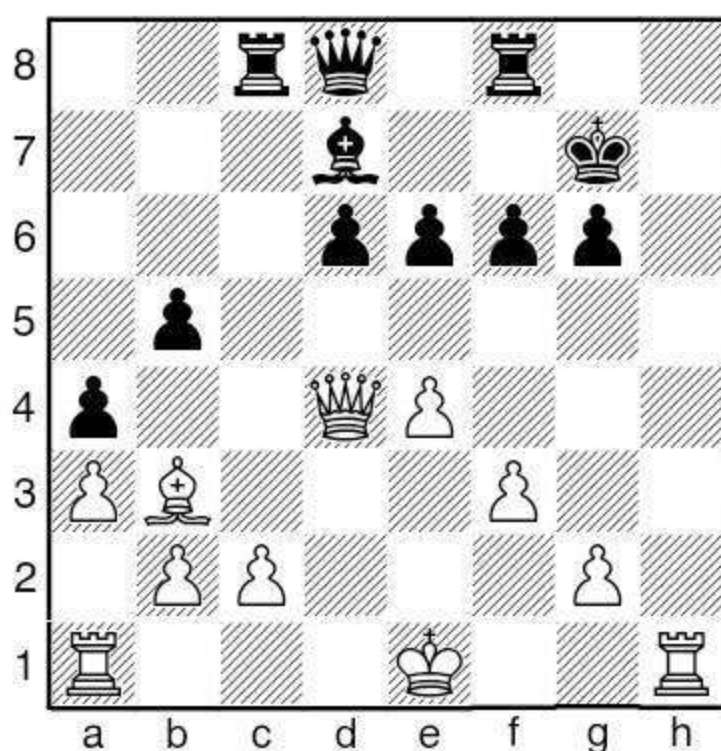
**17...♔xg7 18.♕d4†!**

Preventing the aforementioned queen jump.

**18...f6**

After 18...e5 19.♕d2± White enjoys the better structure.

**19.♖b3 a4**



**20.♕d2!**

The key move, defending c2 while threatening ♔h6†.

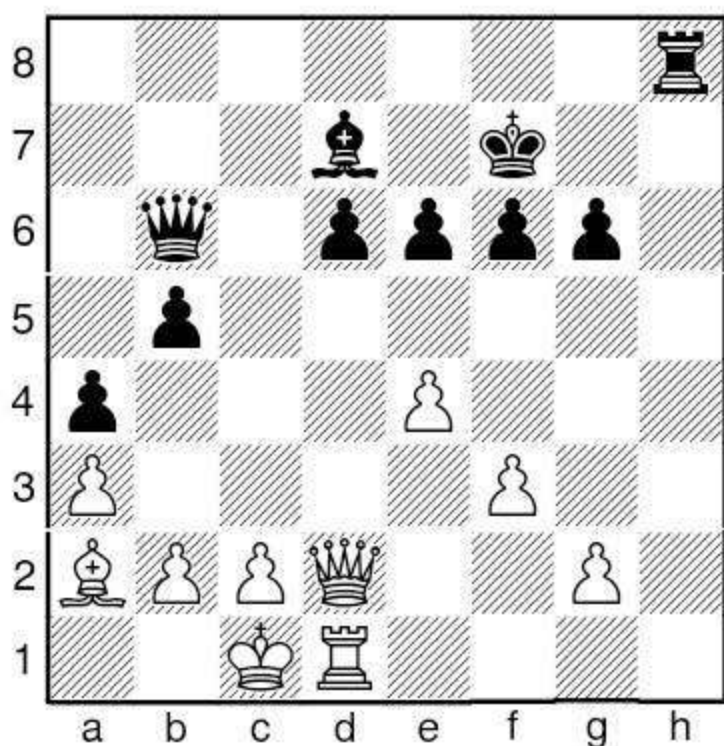
**20...♔b6!?**

Quite a clever move – Black does not prevent the check, but takes the sting out of it while activating his queen.

**21.♖a2**

21.♕h6† ♔f7 22.♕h7† ♔e8 23.♕xg6† ♔d8 does not help White's cause.

21...♖h8 22.0-0-0 ♖xh1 23.♖xh1 ♖h8 24.♖d1 ♔f7



## 25.c3!?N

This novelty is the safest continuation. We are preparing ♖xd6 while improving our position – as you will see later, c2-c3 may prove extremely useful in the endgame. The crucial thing to realize is that Black can't just defend the pawn with ...♔e7.

25.♖xd6 is premature, and after 25...♖xd6 26.♖xd6 ♔e7 27.♖d1 ♖h2 28.♖g1 f5 Black's active pieces enabled him to hold the pawn-down endgame with ease in Sanchez – Silva, email 2011.

I found a second possible improvement over the above game:

## 25.f4!?N

This leads to more complicated play. One could analyse this in a lot of detail, but I will just include a few lines to show the main ideas:

25...♖c5!?

25...♖h2 26.f5±

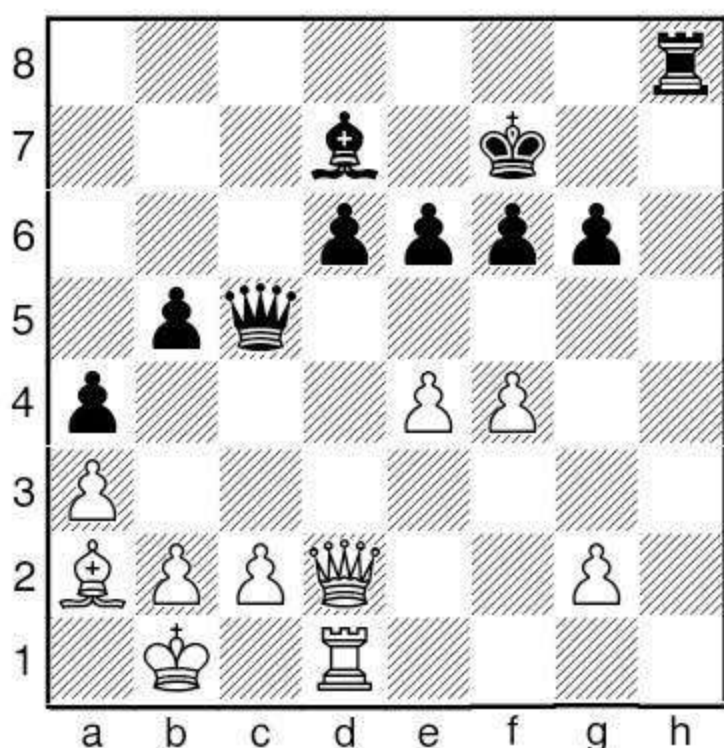
26.♔b1

26.f5 ♔e7 27.e5 gxf5 (27...♖xe5 28.fxe6) 28.exd6† ♔f7



and Black defends.

26.g4 ♖h4! is messy. The most direct attacking try is 27.f5 ♖xg4 28.♔h2 gxf5 29.exf5 ♔xf5 30.♔xd6 ♕e8 when the possibility of ...♔f4† enables Black to survive. If White could reach this position with the king already on b1, then ♖h1 would give him a winning attack. In other words, 26.♔b1 essentially makes g2-g4 into a potent threat.



26...♕c6

The natural 26...♔e7? is brilliantly refuted by 27.e5! fxe5 28.f5!! gxf5 29.♔g5† ♔e8 30.♔g6† and wins.

26...♔g7 is possibly the best move, as the computer says, but it seems rather unnatural. I think White should still have preferable chances, but this will need to be analysed further – both sides have many possibilities. 27.♖e1!? looks like a good place to start.

27.♖e1

Preparing to advance either the e- or the f-pawn.

27...d5!?

27...♔e7 28.e5†

27...♖h2 28.f5 gxf5 29.exf5 ♖xg2 30.♕xe6†±



28. ♔a5!?

The white queen shows her agility, jumping around and making Black's life awkward.

28. f5 gxf5 29. exf5 e5 30. ♔a1 is also possible, intending g4-g5.

Another idea is 28. e5 f5 29. c3 intending to bring the bishop back into play via b1, and trying to create some pressure.

28... ♖b7

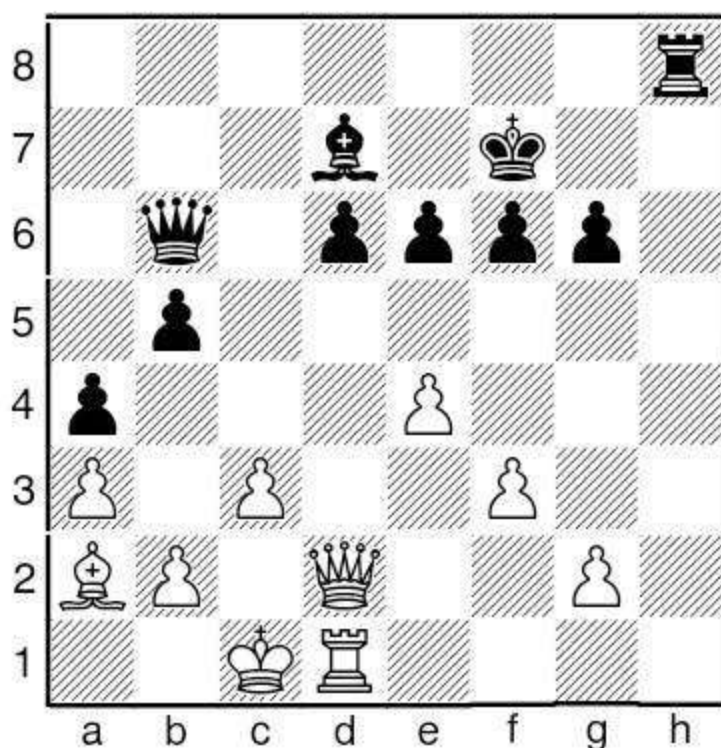
28... ♜c8 29. e5 f5 30. ♜h1! →

29. exd5 exd5

29... ♙xd5? 30. ♙xd5 ♚xd5 (30... exd5 31. ♚a6+–) 31. ♚c7† ♔g8 32. ♔c1 followed by ♜d1 wins.

30. ♚d2 ♜e8 31. ♜h1!±

The game remains one-sided.



25... ♜h2

25... ♔e7 26. e5! fxe5 27. ♚g5† ♔f7 28. ♙b1!±

25... ♚c5 26. ♚xd6 is similar to the main line and will most likely transpose in a few moves.

26. ♚xd6

26. e5!? fxe5 27. ♙b1 ♙e8 28. ♚g5 ♔g7 29. ♙c2 could be



checked further, but it's not clear if we have enough firepower to break through.

**26...♔xd6 27.♖xd6 ♕e7 28.♗d2 ♖h1†**

28...♙c6 is met by 29.c4± or 29.♙b1±.

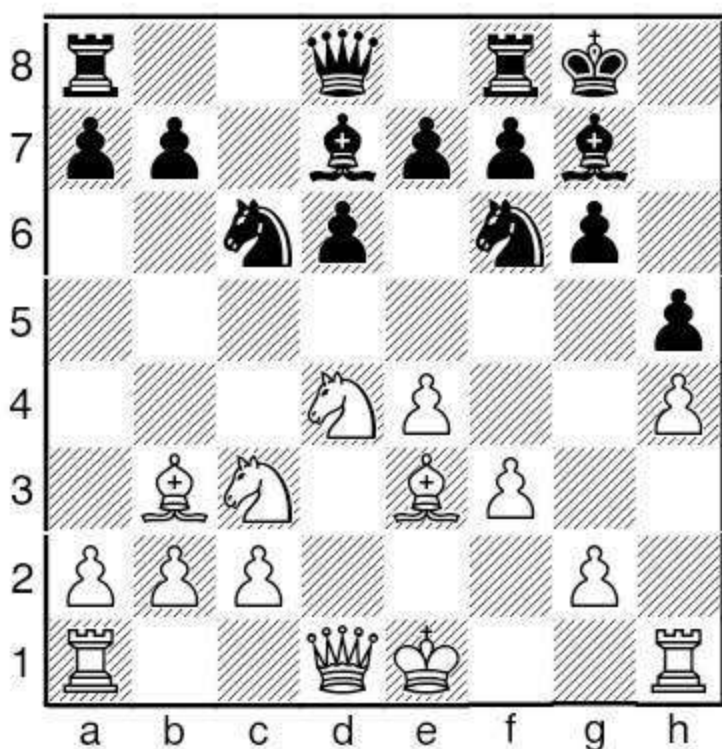
**29.♗d1**

29.♔c2 is also possible, but I like the idea of a quick ♙b1-d3.

**29...♗h2 30.♗g1±**

White is a tempo up over the Sanchez – Silva email game. The extra c2-c3 move is rather useful, as White can quickly bring the bishop back into the game via b1.

### B) 10...h5



This is the most Dragon-ish line from Black's perspective. Now we are constantly on the edge of transposing to the Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack, which is usually reached after 1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♔d2 ♖c6 9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♖c8 11.♙b3 ♖e5 12.h4 h5.

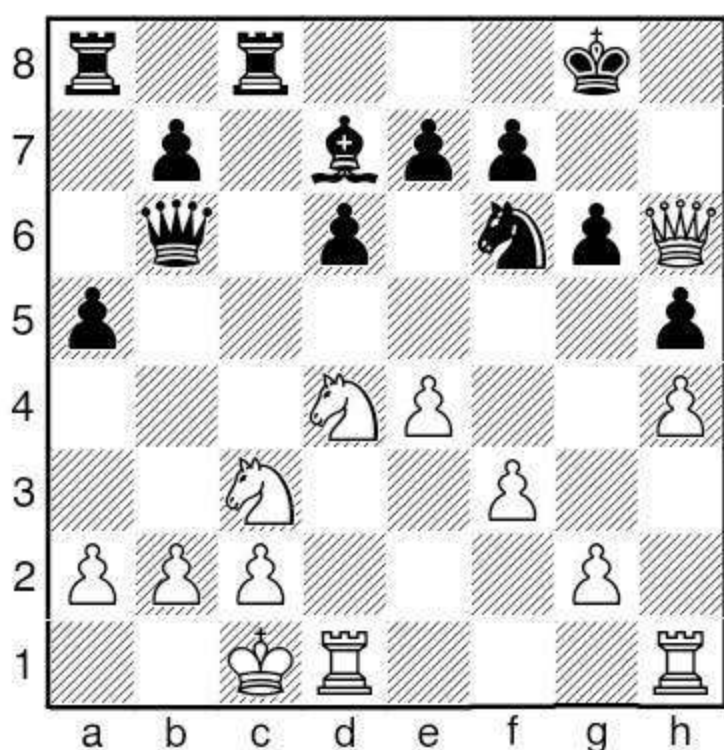
Obviously I want to avoid this, as it falls outside of our

repertoire and has been holding up well for Black theoretically. Instead I will attempt to exploit some subtle differences in the position to pose Black problems in completely new territory.

## 11. ♔d2

Black's two main options are **B1)** 11... ♖e5!? and **B2)** 11... ♖c8.

11... ♖a5 does not make a lot of sense, as the plan of ...b5 and ...♘c4 will not have much punch without the king on c1 as a target. 12. ♕h6 ♘xb3 13. ♖xb3!? Both pawn captures make a certain amount of sense as well, but Grischuk's handling of the position makes a good impression. 13... a5 14. ♖d4 ♕xh6 15. ♔xh6 ♔b6 16. 0-0-0 ♖fc8



17. g4! ♖xc3 18. bxc3 ♔c5 19. ♖d3 ♔e5 20. gxh5 ♘xh5 21. ♖g1±  
Grischuk – Bu Xiangzhi, Calvia (ol) 2004.

Black should not even think about combining ...h5 with the following plan:

11... ♖xd4? 12. ♕xd4 b5 13. g4!

Caruana surprisingly went for 13. 0-0-0 in 2009, but the text move poses Black serious problems, as he



cannot really get away with capturing on g4.

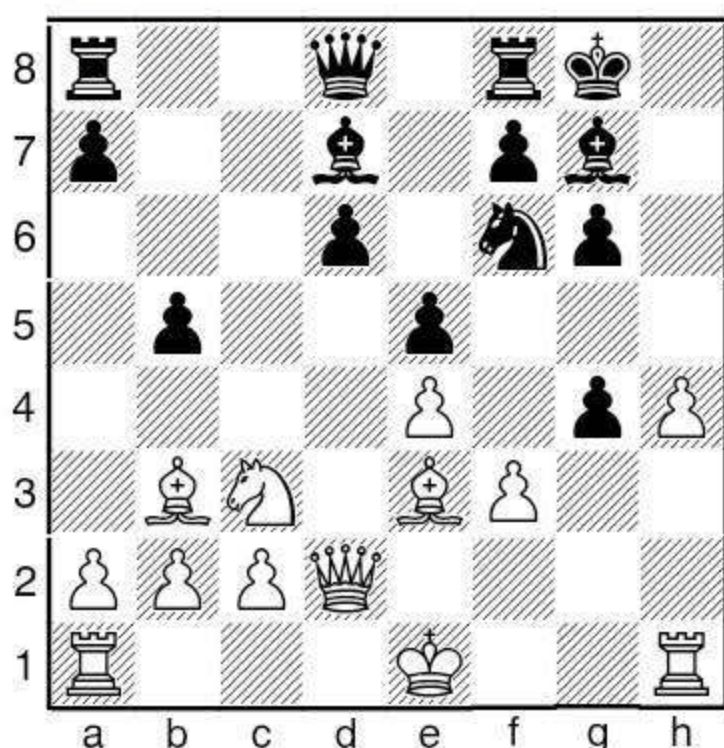
13...e5

13...hxg4? 14.h5 e5 15.h6! was already winning for White in Grischuk –

D. Gurevich, Rishon LeZion (blitz) 2006.

13...a5 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.gxh5 e6 16.hxg6 fxg6 (16...a4 17.♚h6!+–) 17.♚xd6± is also unpleasant for Black.

14.♙e3 hxg4



15.h5!N

15.♙g5 has been played several times with good results, but the text move is even stronger. Here are a few illustrative lines:

15...♘xh5 16.0-0-0 ♙e6

16...g3 gives us a pleasant choice between 17.♘d5 or 17.♖dg1 with ideas of ♖xh5.

16...gxf3 17.♖dg1 ♙e6 (17...♚h7 18.♚f2+–)

18.♙xe6 fxe6 19.♖xg6±

17.fxg4 ♘g3

17...♙xg4 18.♖dg1 is crushing.



18.♔h2!

Strongest, although the simple 18.♖h3 would also be good enough.

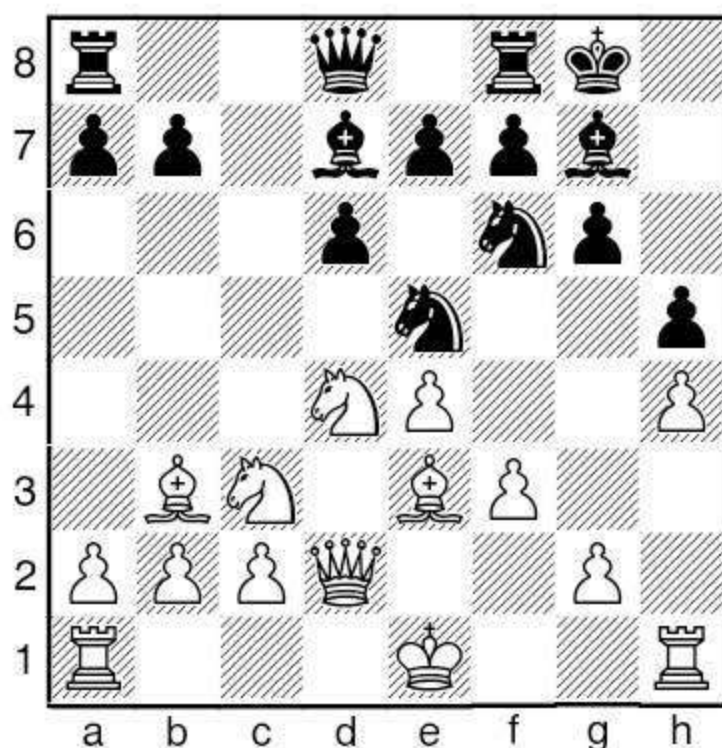
18...♘xh1 19.♖xh1 ♜e8 20.♔h7† ♚f8 21.♙xe6 ♜xe6 22.♘d5 g5

Otherwise ♙h6 is killing.

23.♖f1

With a huge attack.

### B1) 11...♘e5!?



With this move Black maintains the possibility of transposing to a normal Dragon with ...♜c8, but at the same time avoids the ♘xc6 idea that we will encounter in variation B2. The trouble with this move is that Black is not yet ready for ...♘c4, which makes the following move rather attractive:

12.g4!

The point is to meet ...hxg4 with f3-f4, forcing the knight to go to either f3 or c6, neither of which is desirable for Black.

12...hxg4



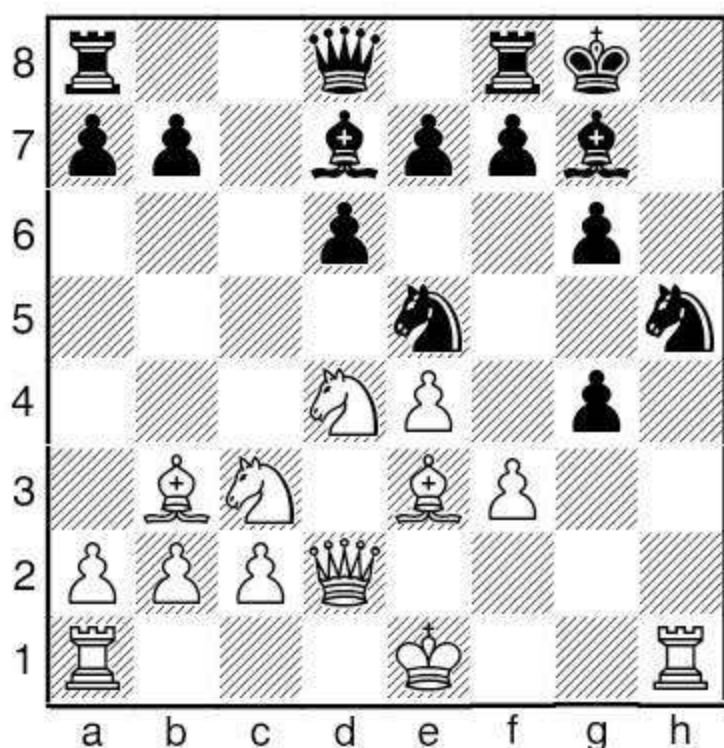
12...♖c8 is playable, but White has good prospects after 13.gxh5 or even 13.g5!?. Taking on g4 is the only real challenge to White's last move, so I think it makes sense to focus mainly on this.

### 13.h5

White can also begin with 13.f4 ♖c6 (13...♘f3† 14.♘xf3 gxf3 15.h5!? gxh5 16.f5→) as in Huckaby – Shivaji, Dallas 1999. Now the most straightforward continuation is 14.h5 ♗xh5, transposing to our main line below. I also think White's position has a lot of potential after 14.0-0-0!?N∞ but we don't need to look at this any deeper, since the main line offers a more forcing path to an advantage.

### 13...♗xh5

13...gxh5 is usually a dubious way to recapture, and after 14.♕h6!? White has fine attacking prospects.



### 14.f4!N

14.♕h6 e6! did not help White in Benderac – Brkic, Neum 2002.

14.0-0-0 squanders White's temporary advantage of having

provoked ...♘e5 without ...♞c8. Now Black has time for 14...♞c8, which immediately transposes to a heavily analysed line of the Soltis Variation where Black seems to be doing well according to theory.

### 14...♘c6

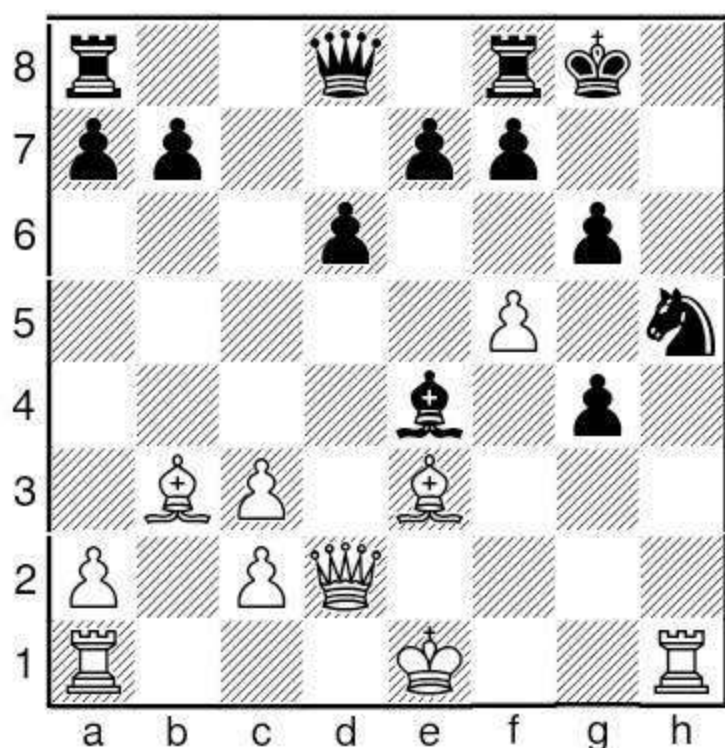
14...♘f3† 15.♘xf3 gxf3 16.f5!? e6 17.0-0-0 exf5 18.♞dg1± and as usual the pawns don't really matter; Black's position is ready to collapse.

### 15.♘xc6!

15.♘f5 looks tempting, but Black has the surprising defence 15...♙xc3! 16.♙xc3 ♙xf5 17.exf5 ♙a5 forcing a queen exchange.

### 15...bxc6

15...♙xc6 looks like it should be more critical, since ...♙xc3 is an instant threat. However, we have a forcing solution: 16.f5! ♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♙xe4



18.fxg6! ♙xg6 (18...♙xh1 19.♙d4 e5 20.♙h6 ♘f6 21.0-0-0 ♙e4 22.♞f1!+-) 19.♞xh5! ♙xh5 20.♙b6! ♙xb6 21.♙g5† ♙h7 22.♙xh5† ♙g7 23.♙g5† ♙h7 24.0-0-0 and wins.



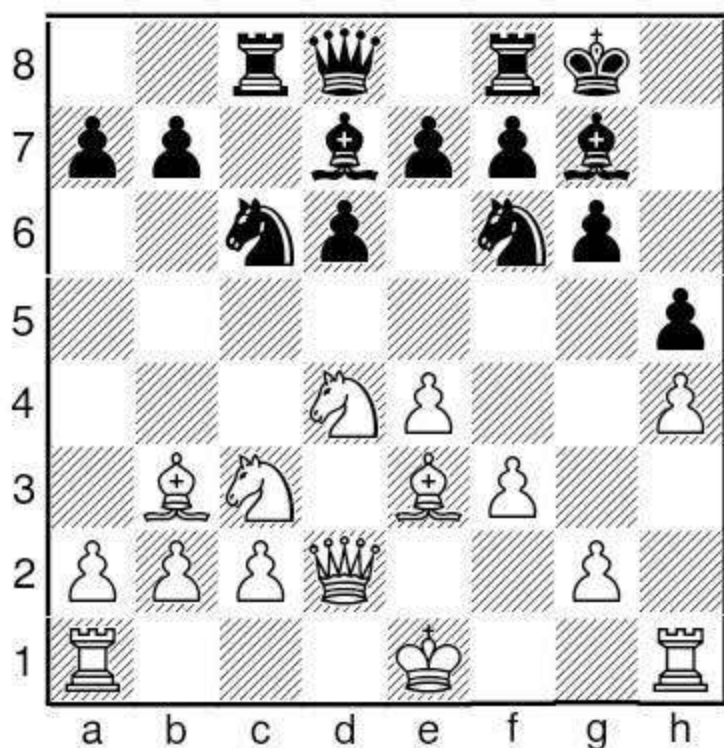
## 16.0-0-0

16.f5!? could also be investigated.

## 16...♖e6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♔g2

It's another of those positions where it will take some work to prove anything against the computer, but to me it looks horrifyingly scary for Black.

### B2) 11...♖c8



This is the most critical move of all. Black refuses to commit his knight prematurely and challenges us to find something better than castling into a standard Dragon position.

## 12.♞xc6!?

It's interesting to note that Anand played this way back in his 1995 World Championship match against Kasparov! I think he hit upon an interesting concept, but he couldn't quite make it work because he held back a little, and eventually Garry won a fantastic game. Now it's time to re-examine it. White wants to eliminate the annoying knight jumps and play in the spirit of 12.g4 as shown below, but only after Black has committed to ...bxc6, rather than giving

him the annoying option of ... $\text{Rxc6}$ .

12.g4!?

This move was tried recently by Edouard. I will show a few lines to demonstrate why I prefer to exchange on c6 immediately.

12...hxg4 13.h5

13. $\text{Nxc6}$   $\text{Rxc6}$ ! is similar.

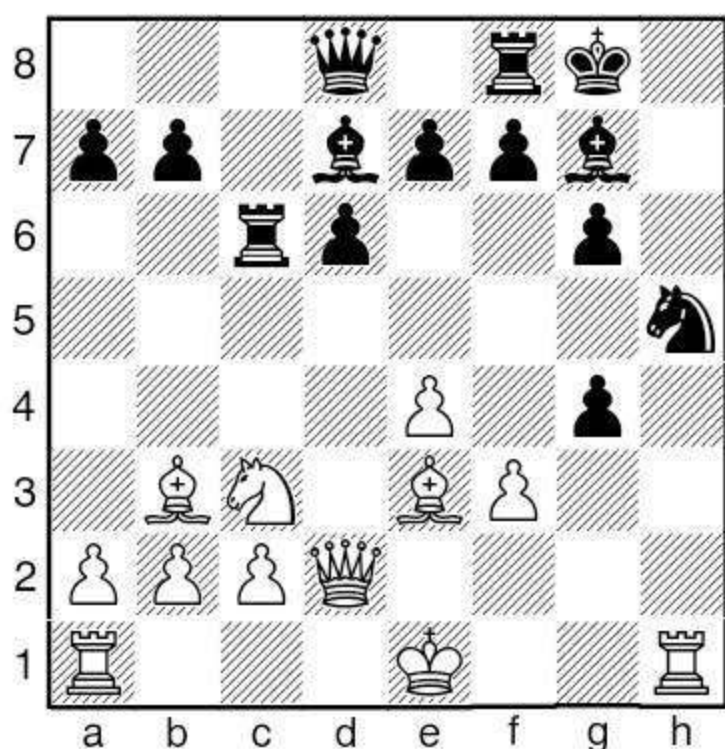
13... $\text{N} \times \text{h5}$  14. $\text{Nxc6}$ !?

14.0-0-0  $\text{N} \text{e5}$ ! transposes to another Yugoslav Attack line where Black is in good shape.

14... $\text{Rxc6}$ !

14...bxc6 would transpose to variation B21 below.

The text move is an important resource which I want to avoid.



15. $\text{Qh6}$

15.0-0-0  $\text{Rxc3}$ ! 16.bxc3  $\text{Qa5}$

15... $\text{Qa5}$

15... $\text{Rc5}$ !? 16. $\text{Nd5}$   $\text{Qxb2}$  17. $\text{Rb1}$   $\text{Qe5}$  18. $\text{R} \times \text{h5}$   $\text{Qc3}$

19. $\text{Nxc3}$   $\text{R} \times \text{h5}$  is a winning attempt, although the position is still rather double-edged.

16. $\text{Q} \times \text{g7}$   $\text{Q} \times \text{g7}$  17. $\text{Qd5}$   $\text{Rxc3}$  18.bxc3  $\text{R} \text{h8}$

Black was out of danger and went on to draw in Edouard





## 14.h5!N

Now we get into typical Dragon business on the kingside, while the annoying ... $\text{Rxc3}$  ideas have been blocked.

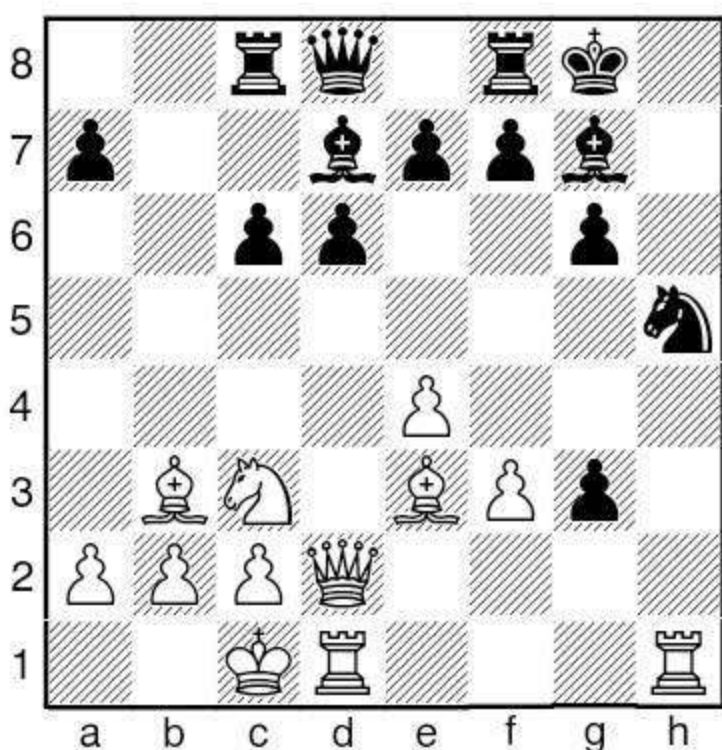
## 14... $\text{Nhx5}$

14...gxh5 15.e5! is a clever sacrifice; the point is seen after 15...dxe5 16. $\text{Qh6} \rightarrow$  when the e5-pawn blocks the fifth rank, meaning that ... $\text{Ra5}$  no longer prevents  $\text{Qg5}$ .

## 15.0-0-0 g3

15...gxf3 16. $\text{Rdg1} \uparrow$

15... $\text{Ra5}$  16.fxg4  $\text{Nf6}$  (16... $\text{Qxg4}$  17. $\text{Rdg1} \rightarrow$ ) 17. $\text{Qh6}$  (17. $\text{Rdg1}$   $\text{N} \times \text{g4}$  18. $\text{Qh6}$  is an equally playable move order) 17... $\text{N} \times \text{g4}$  18. $\text{Rdg1}$   $\text{Qf6}$  19. $\text{Qf4}$  White has a dangerous attack.



## 16. $\text{Ne2}$ !

16. $\text{Rdg1}$   $\text{Ra5}$  17. $\text{Qg5}$  c5! 18. $\text{R} \times \text{h5}$  c4 is a mess.

16. $\text{R} \times \text{h5}!$ ? gxh5 17. $\text{Rg1}$  h4 18. $\text{Ne2}!$  followed by  $\text{N} \times \text{g3}$  is an amazingly fun position, but I won't go any deeper as the main line is stronger.

After considering the two rook moves shown above, I eventually realized it would be best to keep all options open



while preventing the annoying...♙a5. Now Black's position is essentially just collapsing, and the following lines just use some elementary tactics to prove the point.

### 16...c5

16...e6 17.♖xh5! gxh5 18.♘xg3 ♕f6 19.♖g1! ♕xb2† 20.♔d1 is winning for White.

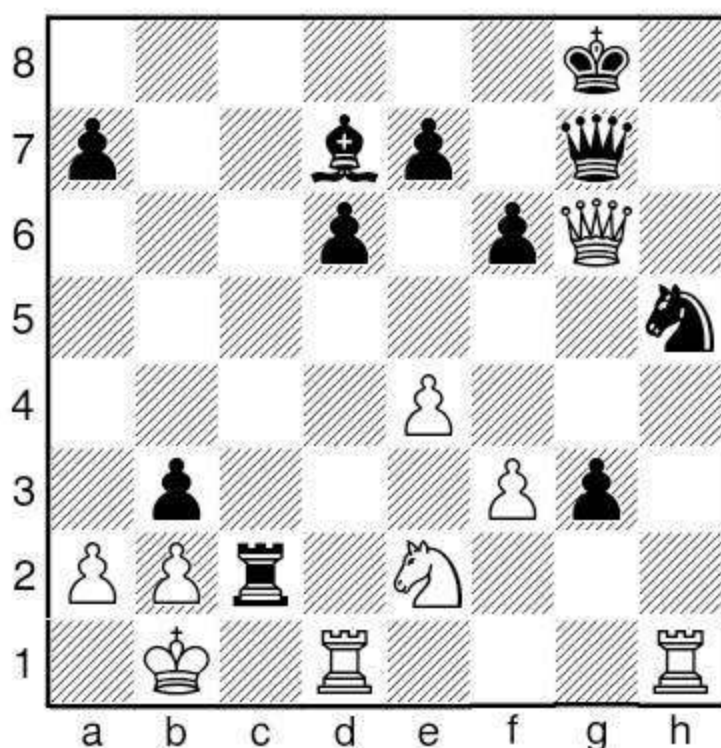
### 17.♗h6! c4

17...e6 18.♖xh5 gxh5 19.♘xg3

### 18.♗xg7 cxb3

18...♔xg7 19.♖xh5! ♖h8 20.♖xh8 ♕xh8 21.♕d4†+–

### 19.♕h6 ♖xc2† 20.♔b1 f6 21.♗xf8 ♕xf8 22.♕xg6† ♕g7



### 23.♕xg7† ♔xg7 24.♘xg3! ♘xg3 25.♖dg1±

Black has avoided being mated, but he faces an uphill struggle in the endgame.

### B22) 13...c5!N

Of course the most critical approach is not to give us what we want, and instead to try and generate counterplay.

## 14.♔c4!

Blocking any queenside stuff for the moment.

I briefly looked at 14.gxh5 ♖xh5 15.♔c4, but Black has great prospects on the queenside, which outweigh the open g-file: 15...♔h7 16.0-0-0 ♖b8 17.♖dg1 ♔b6→

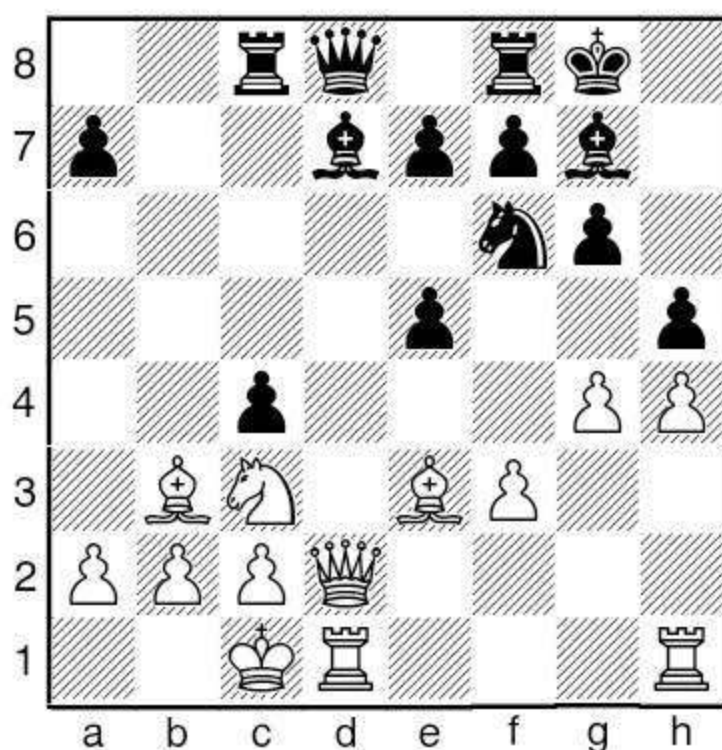
14.g5 ♖e8 15.♔d3 reaches an interesting position, but Black has quite a few ways to continue; 15...♖c7 16.f4 ♖a8! is one nice idea.

## 14.e5 dxe5 15.0-0-0

This is going for too little, and Black has some nice firework defences:

## 15...c4!

15...♔c6 16.♔g2 ♔b6 (16...♔c7 17.gxh5 ♖xh5 18.♔xg6 ♔xf3 19.♔f5→) 17.gxh5 ♖xh5 18.♔xg6 (18.♖e4) 18...♔xf3 19.♔g5↔



16.g5 cxb3 17.gxf6 ♖xc3! 18.♔xc3

18.axb3 ♖xc2† 19.♔xc2 ♔xf6 is no better.

18...bxa2 19.♔a3 ♔xf6 20.♔xa2 ♔c8

Black has two pawns for the exchange and a much safer king.



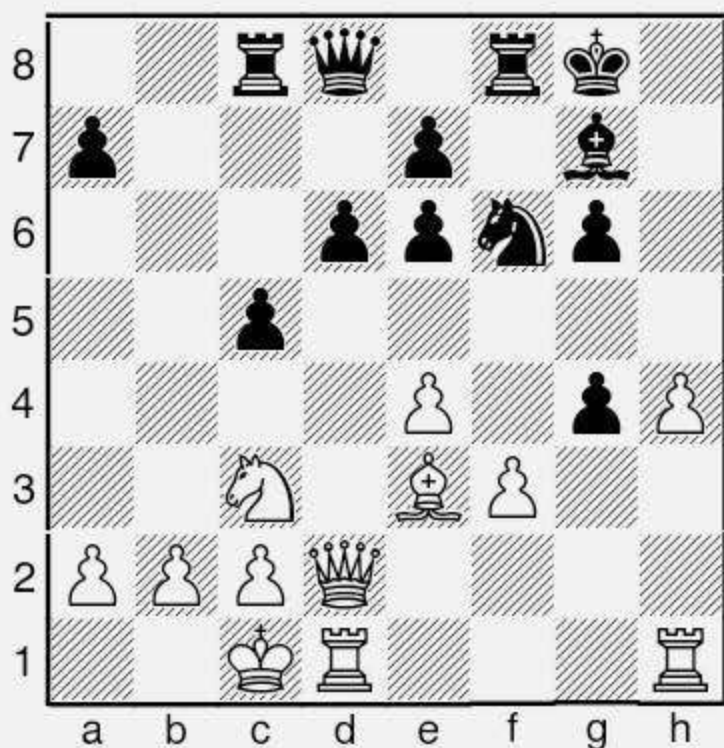
Once again, Black should aim for counterplay on the queenside before he even looks at the kingside. The two main candidates are **B221)** 14...♖b8 and **B222)** 14...♔b6!?

14...hxg4?! 15.h5 ♘xh5 16.♙h6 intending 0-0-0 is extremely dangerous.

14...d5!? seems like a strange idea, but we should always consider such moves that might drastically alter the landscape of the position. In this case it fails to make a big impact: 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♙xb2 17.♖d1 hxg4 18.h5

White continues with an initiative, although many details remain to be worked out. An important point is that Black's bishop seems woefully misplaced on b2, and is liable to be blocked off with a timely c2-c3.

14...♙e6 15.♙xe6 fxe6 gives White multiple ways to continue. For instance: 16.0-0-0 (16.♙h6!? hxg4 17.h5 ♔e8 18.0-0-0) 16...hxg4 Positionally inclined players might be attracted by:



17.e5 (17.h5!?∞ is the aggressive option)

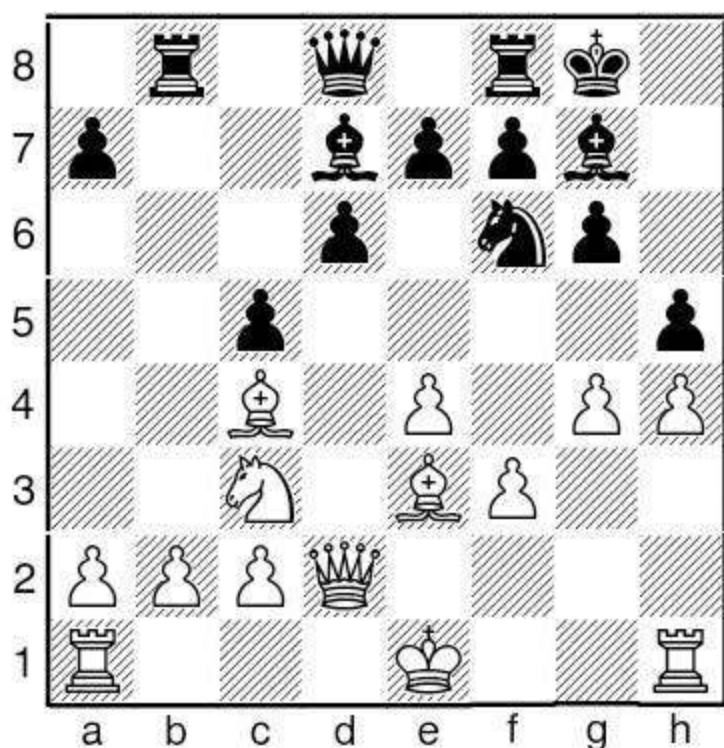
17...dxe5 18.♔xd8 ♖fxd8 19.♖xd8† ♖xd8 20.fxg4 ♘xg4

21.♙xc5 Black's pawns are hideous. 21...♙h6† 22.♔b1 ♖d7

23. ♖e4±

## B221) 14... ♜b8

This is the most natural move, and initially I had considered it to be alright for Black. Eventually I realized this is the right moment to bring back Vishy's idea with:



## 15. ♙h6!?

Suddenly things aren't too easy for Black.

15.e5 dxe5 16.g5 ♘e8 17. ♙xc5 just doesn't feel right for White after 17... ♘d6∞.

Another idea is to play ♙h6 after gxh5, which leads to less forcing lines. From a practical point of view, the main line is more dangerous, but if Black is prepared with the forced lines given below, he might be able to wriggle out of danger. Even if that is the case, the gxh5 line may remain a headache because White's initiative is of a slower, less forcing nature, and I wouldn't fancy being Black in such a situation – even though objectively he could be okay.

15.gxh5!? ♘xh5 16. ♙h6

This avoids any forcing lines after ... ♜b4, but gives



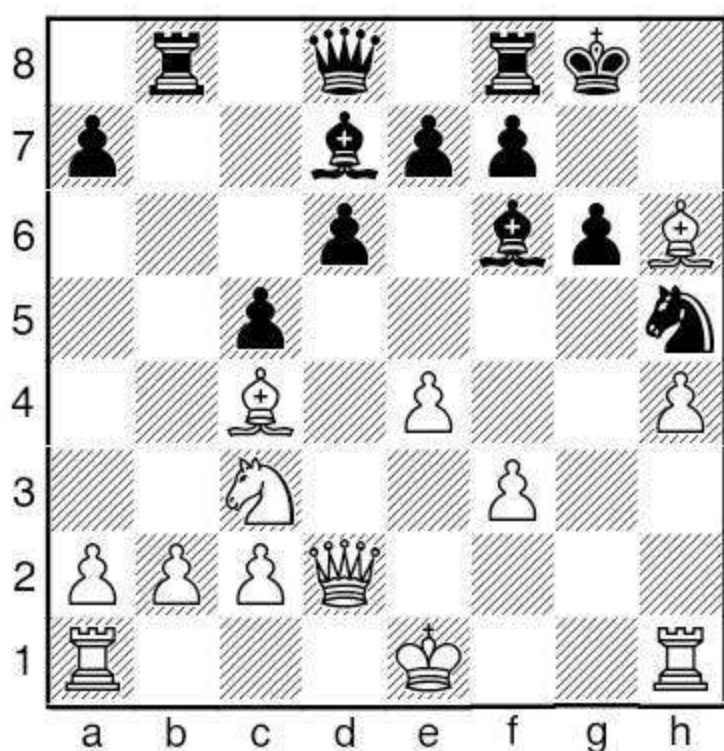
Black some additional options like ...♙f6 or ...♙e6. The position remains complicated and hard to assess, although White certainly has an initiative.

16...♙f6

16...♖b4 can just be met by 17.b3 here.

16...♙e6 17.♙xe6 fxe6 18.♖g1 ♔e8 19.♙xg7 (19.0-0-0 ♙e5!?) 19...♔xg7 20.0-0-0 ♖xf3 21.♔g5 ♔h7 22.♖df1 I think White has excellent compensation.

After the text move I don't really want to take on f8 and try to hold on to my extra material. Other options are:



17.♙g5!?

17.♖g1 e6 18.♙g5!?! is another idea.

17...♙g7

17...♙c6? 18.♙xf6 ♞xf6 19.h5±

17...♙xg5 18.♔xg5 ♔h7 19.♖g1↑ threatening ♙xf7.

18.♞d5 ♖e8 19.c3

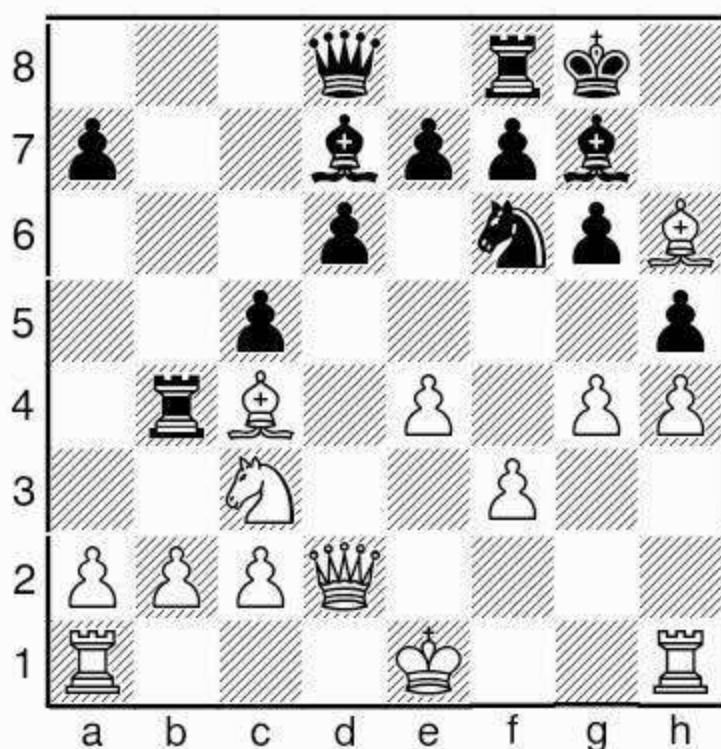
Bringing the queenside under control. The position remains unclear though.

15...♖b4

15...hxg4 16.h5! is strong as usual.

15...♖xb2 16.♙xg7 ♔xg7 17.g5 ♘e8 18.♙b3±

15...♙e6 16.♙xe6 fxe6 17.0-0-0 ♚b6 18.b3±



**16.♙b3!**

16.b3 would allow a nice sacrifice: 16...♖xc4! 17.bxc4 hxg4 18.h5 gxf3=

**16...♖d4!**

Black needs to be precise to survive.

16...c4? 17.♙xg7 ♔xg7 18.g5 ♘e8 19.♘d5±

16...hxg4 17.h5 is dangerous.

**17.♚e3**

The rook looks odd on d4, but it has certain advantages: it prevents 0-0-0 and will no longer be hit by ♘d5 with tempo in some lines.





## 17...♙xh6

17...e5 allows White to switch from an attack to a positional edge with: 18.♙xg7 ♔xg7 19.g5±

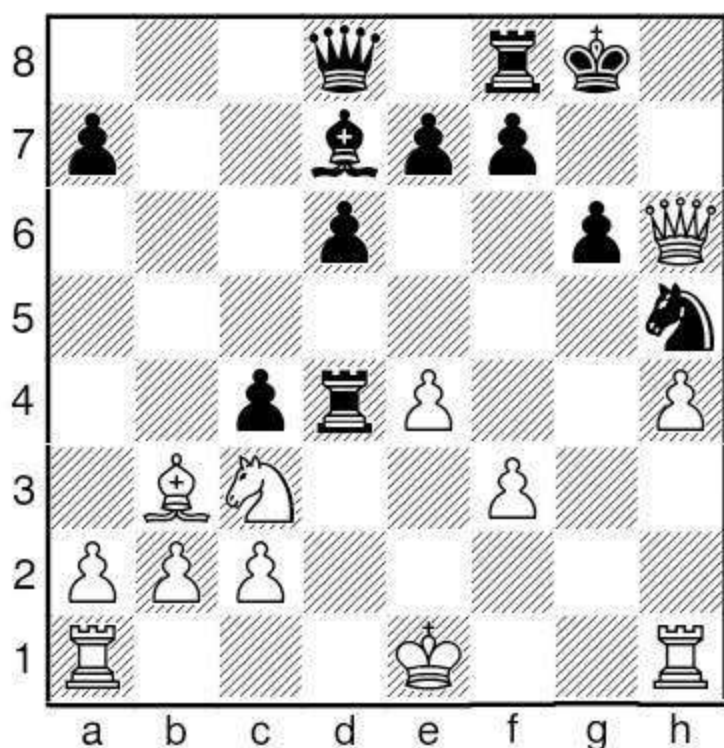
17...♙xg4!? is an interesting try, but White stays on top with: 18.♙xg7 ♔xg7 19.♞e2! ♚a5† 20.c3 ♙xf3 21.♚xf3 ♖xe4 22.0-0-0±

## 18.♚xh6 c4! 19.gxh5

White cannot exploit the position of Black's rook with 19.♞e2? on account of 19...♞xg4! 20.fxg4 ♖xe4⚡.

## 19...♞xh5

19...cxb3 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♚xg6† ♔h8 22.axb3±



## 20.♞e2 ♚a5†!?

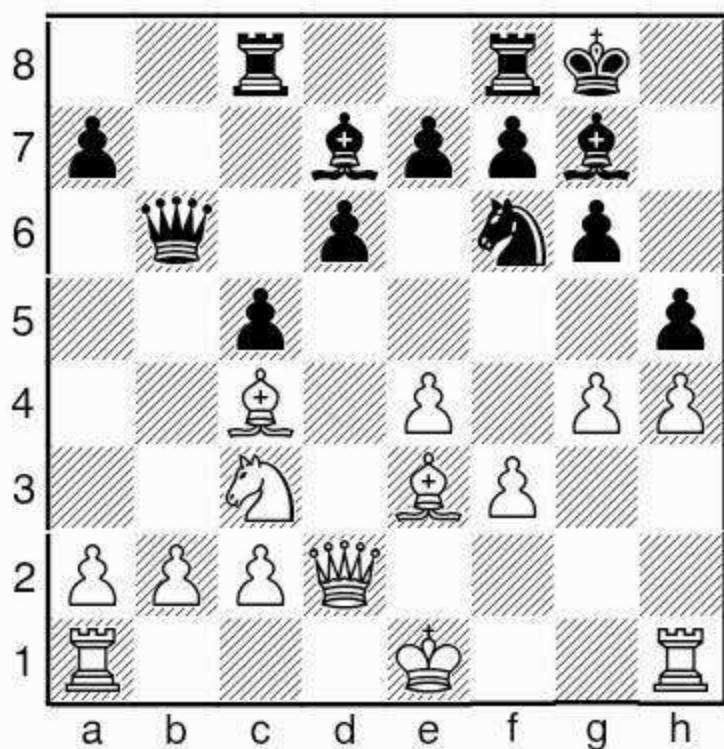
After 20...♚b6 21.♞xd4 ♚xd4 22.c3 ♚c5 (22...♚b6 23.♙xc4±) 23.♙c2 ♖b8 24.♚g5! White is an exchange up, although Black has some compensation.

## 21.c3 cxb3 22.♞xd4 bxa2∞

An insane position has arisen. White has multiple ways to maintain '0.00' according to the machine, but it's not so easy to expand beyond that. At the same time, the position

is ripe for exploration.

### B222) 14...♔b6!?



Playing in Garry's style is the most critical move of all, as it is more forcing than the previous line. However, we now have the opportunity to switch plans with:

### 15.e5!?

I will say now that I'm generally not the biggest fan of this type of move, and I would ideally prefer to go for the blunt attacking approach. The trouble with going after material like this is that it gives Black a lot of time to develop and takes the focus away from White's attack – a risky proposition when White's king isn't entirely safe. However, in this particular case there was no other way to develop White's initiative. Besides, after kicking the knight away from f6 we don't necessarily have to capture the bishop on d7, and can instead put the knight on the powerful d5-square.

### 15...dxe5

15...♘xg4 is not a serious alternative due to: 16.fxg4 ♙xg4 17.0-0!→



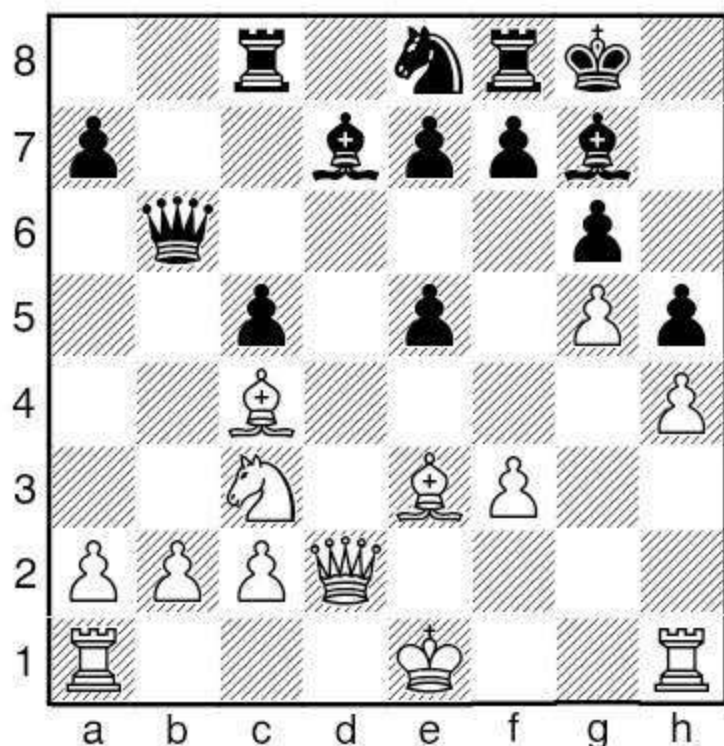
## 16.g5 ♘e8

This is clearly the most challenging move.

16...♖fd8? 17.gxf6 ♙e6 18.♚e2 ♜xb2 19.0-0±

16...♞h7 17.♞d5! (17.♚xd7? ♜xb2±) 17...♚d8 18.0-0-0 gives

White a nice initiative; compared to variation B2221 below, Black's knight is on a poor square.



We now reach a critical position where White has two contrasting options: **B2221)** 17.♞d5 and **B2222)** 17.♚xd7.

### **B2221)** 17.♞d5

At first I thought this could be a relatively simple attempt for a positional edge, but then I discovered a strong reply for Black.

### 17...♚d8!

After 17...♚d8 18.0-0-0 ♙e6 19.♚f2 it's hard to give a definite evaluation, but I think Black's queen would be better placed on d8.

Of course, the first move I considered was the obvious:

17...♜xb2 18.♙f2!

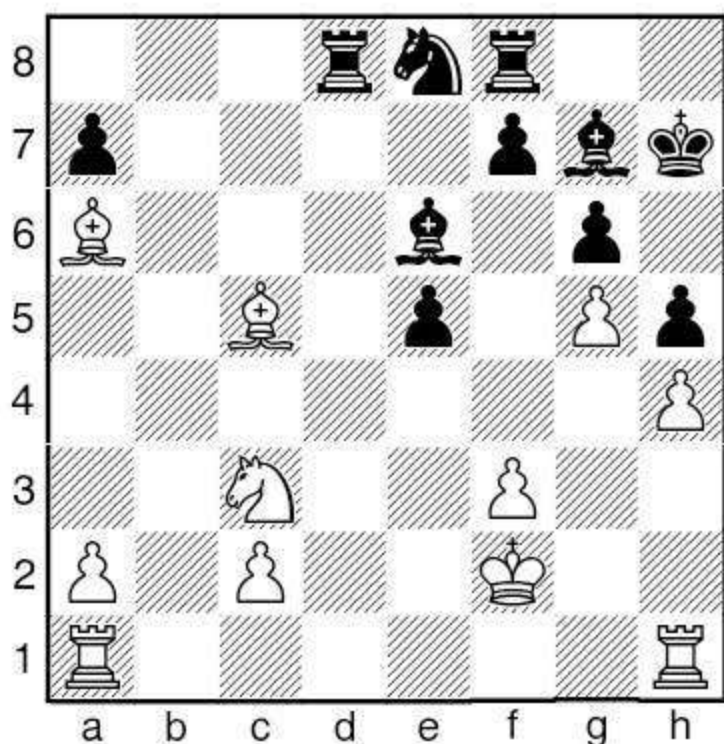
18.0-0 ♞h7 19.♞xe7 leads to similar play but, since

the queens are likely to be exchanged, the king will be better placed nearer the centre.

18...♔h7 19.♘xe7 ♖c7

19...♖d8 20.♖ab1 ♔a3 21.♔d3! leads to a favourable endgame for White.

20.♘d5 ♖c8 21.♙a6 ♖d8 22.♙xc5 ♙e6 23.♔c3 ♔xc3 24.♘xc3



24...♖d2†!?

24...♖h8 25.♘e4 looks rather ugly for black.

The text move is an additional option available to Black after the king goes f2, but White still has more than one good reply.

25.♘e2

25.♔e3!? ♖xc2 26.♖hc1 ♖xc1 27.♖xc1 ♖h8 looks a little worrying for Black – can he really get out of the developmental mess in time without losing the a-pawn? The computer seems to think he can, but in a practical game White would have some chances to press without much risk.

25...♖xc2

25...♖h8?! 26.♙d3±





26.♖hc1!?

There is also 26.♙xf8 ♙xf8 27.♙d3 when Black certainly has some compensation for the exchange, although it's clear which side is trying to win.

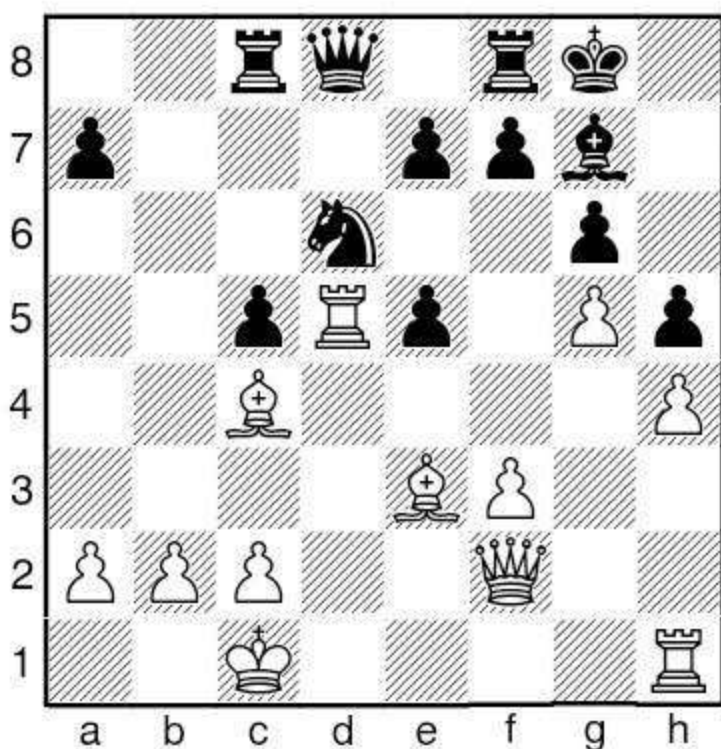
26...♖xc1 27.♖xc1 ♖h8 28.a4!?

The position is similar to the 25.♙e3 note above, but here the rook on c1 is more active and we don't have to worry about annoying ...♘d5† ideas. White will soon pick up the a7-pawn and will continue pressing without much risk.

## 18.0-0-0

Initially, I had assumed White had good prospects here, as his pieces are active and Black appears to have some coordination problems. Unfortunately, there is a forcing sequence which completely alters the aesthetics of the position.

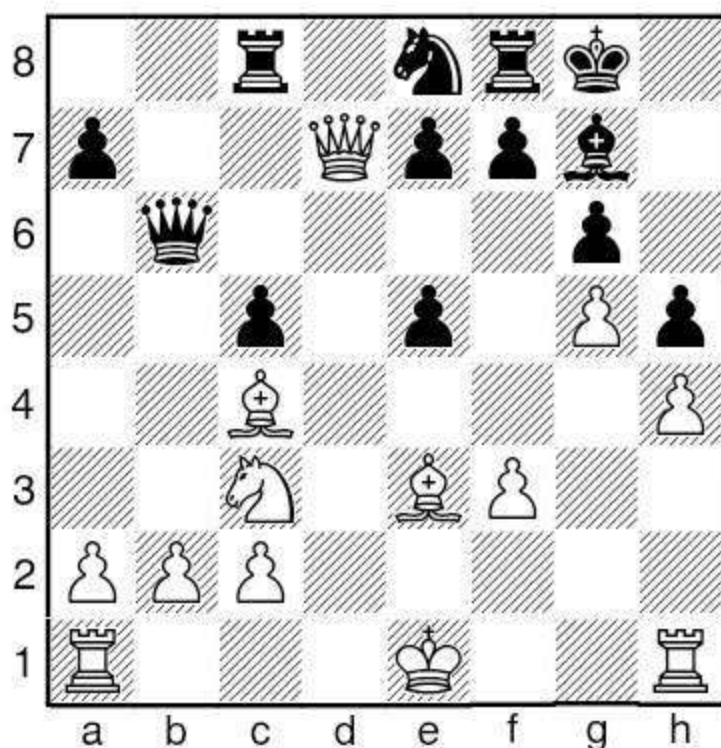
18...♙e6! 19.♙f2 ♙xd5 20.♖xd5 ♘d6



21.♙xc5 ♙c7 22.♙b3 ♘f5!

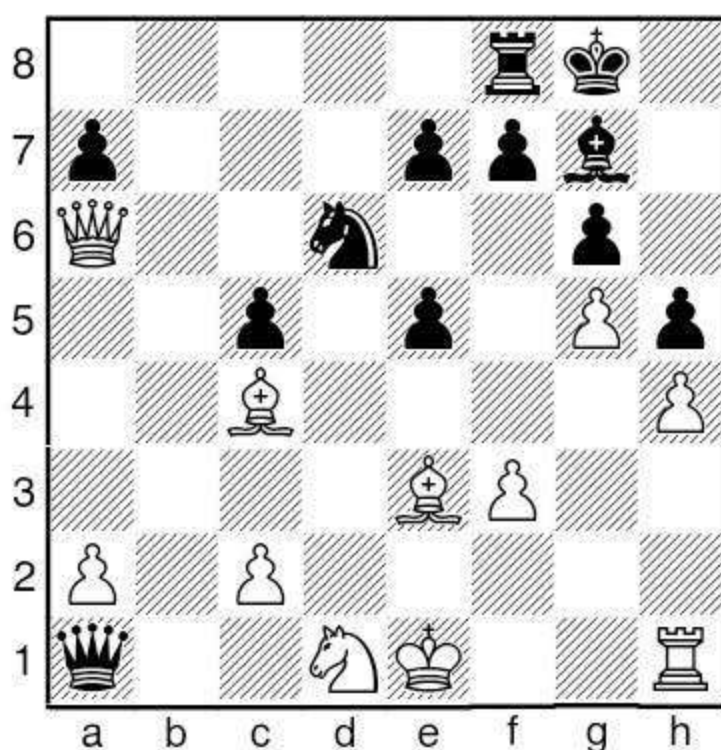
Black has the safer king, and a subsequent ...♘d4 will probably lead to a position with opposite-coloured bishops where Black will not have much to worry about.

B2222) 17. ♔xd7



As I mentioned before, this is not my ideal move; in general, if you are thinking of grabbing material against the Dragon then your alarm bells should start ringing. Nevertheless, in this particular case it poses some interesting problems to Black.

17... ♙xb2 18. ♘d1 ♙xa1 19. ♙xc8 ♘d6 20. ♙a6



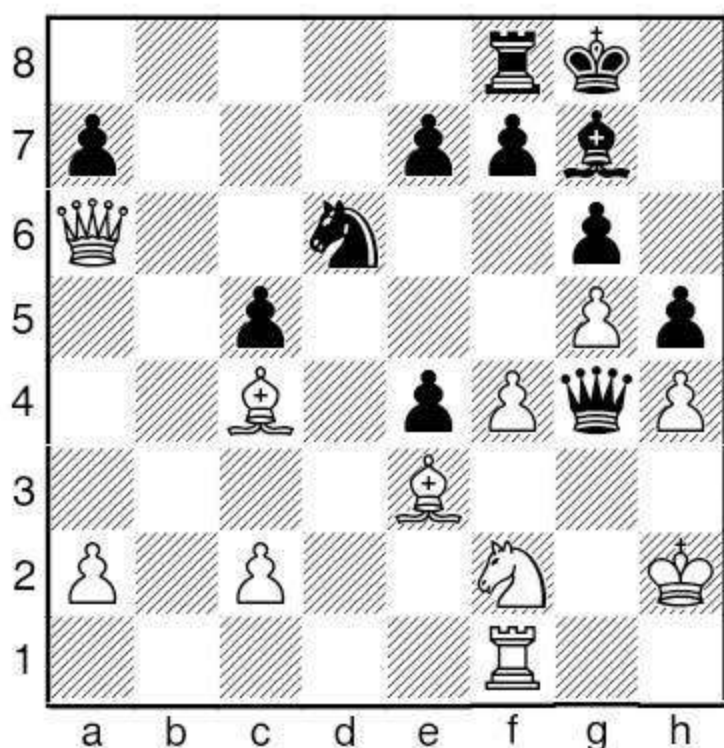
20... e4!



An important resource, allowing the queen to come to e5.

## 21.fxe4

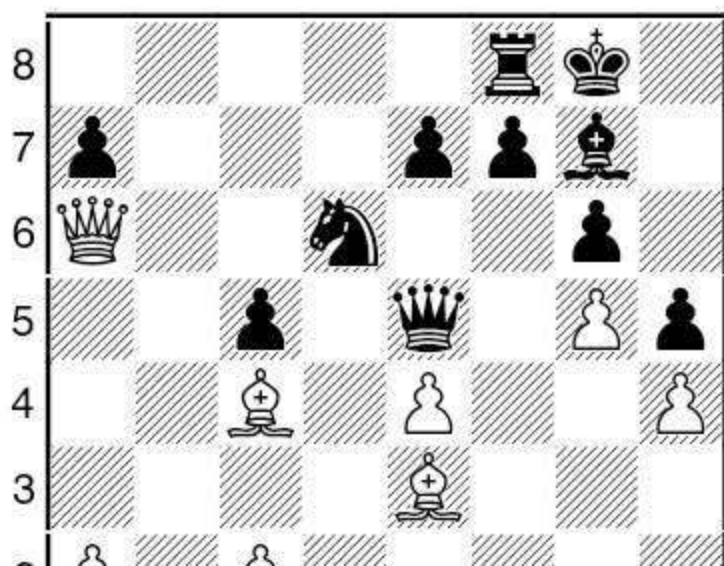
21.0-0 may lead to a rather amusing repetition: 21...♔e5 22.f4 (22.♔g2 exf3† 23.♖xf3 ♔e4 24.♙e2 ♘f5 25.♙f2 ♘xh4† 26.♙xh4 ♔xh4 is unpleasant for White) 22...♔f5 23.♔h2 ♔g4 24.♘f2



24...♔f3! (24...♔xh4† 25.♘h3 is still unclear, but it seems rather dodgy for Black) 25.♘d1 ♔g4=

## 21...♔e5

Black obviously has some initiative for the piece, but White is not too far from consolidating. Best play continues:



## 22.♙d5 e6

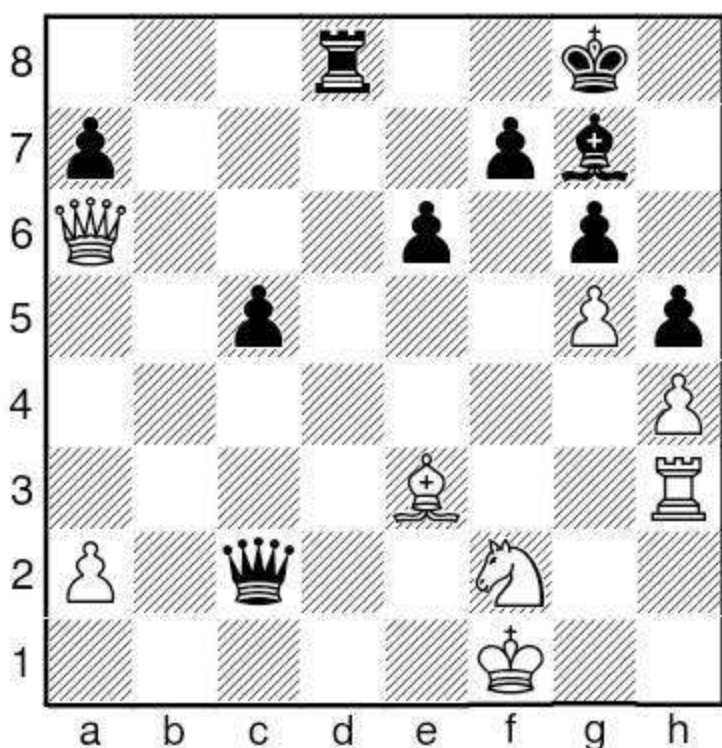
22...♘xe4? 23.♚d3± and White is getting coordinated.

## 23.♙c6 ♘xe4!

23...♚g3† 24.♙f2 ♙c3† 25.♔f1 ♚f3 26.♘xc3! ♚xh1† 27.♔e2±

White has given back some material but his king is safe and his bishops will rule the board.

23...♖d8 24.♖h3! leads to a mostly forced line: 24...♘xe4 25.♙xe4 ♚xe4 26.♘f2 ♚xc2 27.♔f1! and the king reaches safety. Black has three pawns for the piece, but they aren't too scary, and the game should be quite one-sided. Here are a few illustrative lines:



27...♙d4 (27...♚b1† 28.♔g2 ♚b6 29.♚xb6 axb6 30.♖h1 ♖a8 31.♖b1 ♖xa2 32.♖xb6 ♖a4 33.♔f3 ♖xh4 34.♙f4 Even with just one pawn left, White is dominating. 34...e5 35.♙d2 ♖d4 36.♘e4±) 28.♔g2 ♙xe3 29.♖xe3 ♖d2 30.♖f3± Black has no clear route to a draw.

## 24.♖h3! ♘g3!

24...♖d8 transposes to 23...♖d8 24.♖h3 ♘xe4 above.

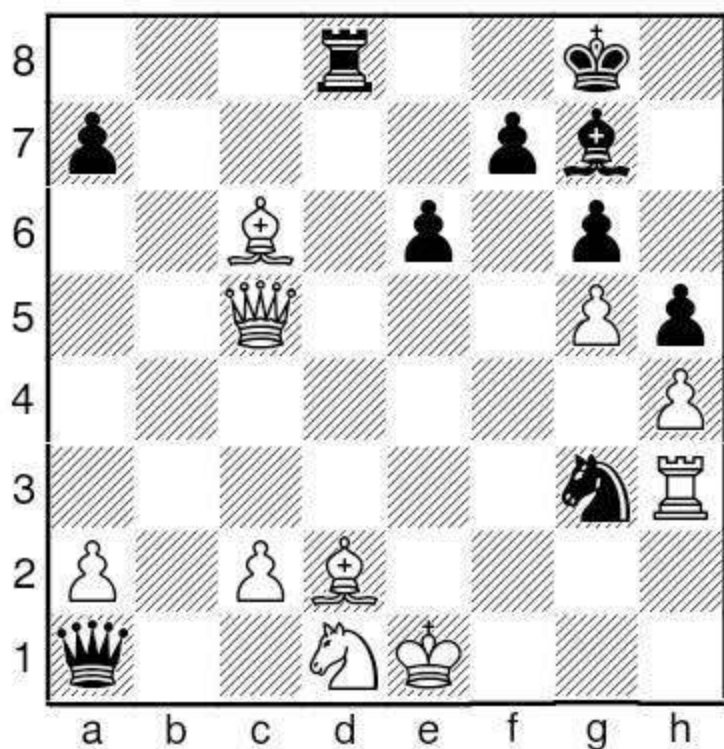
## 25.♚c4



25.♙b5!? is the computer's attempt to hang on to the piece, but I don't quite trust where it is going.

25...♖d8 26.♙xc5 ♜a1 27.♙d2

27.♙d7 ♔h7 28.♙c7 ♙e5 29.♙xd8 ♙c3† 30.♙d2 ♙xd2†  
31.♙xd2 ♙d4† is a draw.



27...♘f1 28.♖d3 ♖xd3 29.cxd3 ♘xd2 30.♙xd2 ♙xa2† 31.♙e1  
♙b1

Black has two pawns for the piece, and the reduced material gives him good drawing chances. Nevertheless, he still has to show some accuracy.

## Conclusion

10.h4!? is a good way to take Accelerated Dragon players out of their comfort zone. The typical plan of 10...♘xd4 11.♙xd4 b5 can now be met by 12.h5 with good attacking chances. It is worth knowing some analytical details, especially in the sharp 12...a5 13.hxg6 hxg6 14.♘d5! ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♖c8 16.a3! variation. Our main line saw Black eventually escape to an endgame after precise defence, but even here White's extra pawn gives him realistic winning chances.



still has to show some accuracy.

## Conclusion

10.h4!? is a good way to take Accelerated Dragon players out of their comfort zone. The typical plan of 10...♘xd4 11.♙xd4 b5 can now be met by 12.h5 with good attacking chances. It is worth knowing some analytical details, especially in the sharp 12...a5 13.hxg6 hxg6 14.♘d5! ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♖c8 16.a3! variation. Our main line saw Black eventually escape to an endgame after precise defence, but even here White's extra pawn gives him realistic winning chances.

10...h5 is the most challenging move, which may be employed by opponents whose repertoire also includes the Dragon – especially bearing in mind that the potential Dragon transposition would cut out the 12.♔b1 option which I covered in Chapters 4 and 5. So, after 11.♔d2 ♖c8 we postpone castling, and instead launch an immediate attack with 12.♘xc6!? bxc6 13.g4!. This could prove an incredibly dangerous practical weapon, as it has only occurred in a single game, so all of the subsequent analysis is my own. The one game continued with the natural 13...hxg4?!, which is already a mistake and allows us to launch a dangerous attack with 14.h5!N.

The critical direction is 13...c5!N 14.♙c4!, after which I discussed a few ideas for both sides. My analysis indicates that Black is just about holding his own after a lot of accurate moves, but the whole thing is ripe for practical testing and further investigation. Overall I feel that the h2-h4 lines are in keeping with the spirit of the Yugoslav Attack, and the explosive tactical ideas will appeal to many players, even if it doesn't guarantee a final advantage. You also have the 10.♔d2 system from the previous chapter of course, so it comes down to personal preferences.



# Chapter 12

## Rauzer



### 6...♗d7 and Others

#### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6  
6.♗g5

A) 6...♖a5

B) 6...g6

C) 6...♗d7 7.♖d2

C1) 7...h6!? 8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.0-0-0 ♘xd4 10.♖xd4 ♖a5  
11.f4

C11) 11...♗g8

C12) 11...♗c8

C2) 7...♘xd4

C3) 7...♗c8 8.f4

C31) 8...♘g4!?

C32) 8...h6

C33) 8...♘xd4 9.♖xd4 ♖a5 10.e5

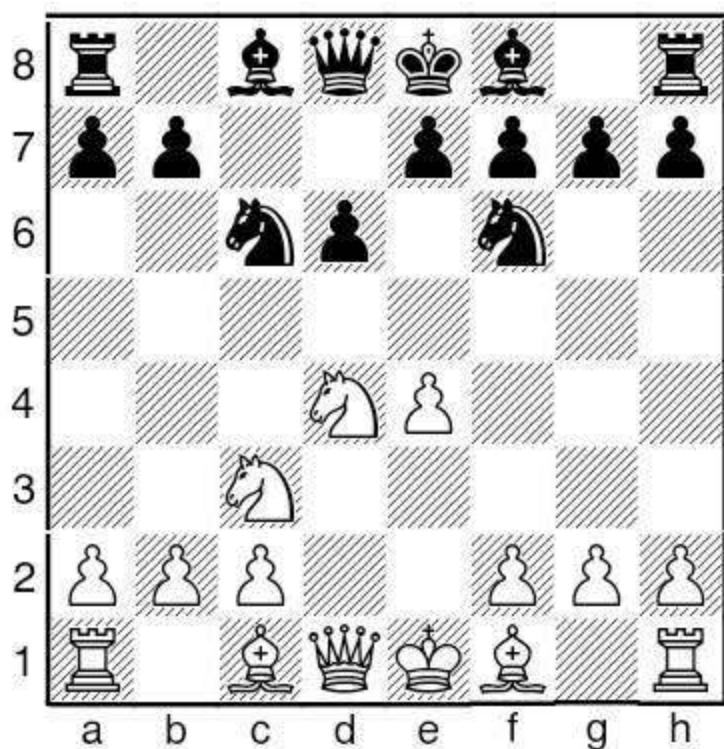
C331) 10...♗xc3

C332) 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 e6 12.0-0-0  
♗c6 13.♘b5 ♗xb5 14.exf6 ♗c6  
15.h4 g6 16.♗c4 ♗c5 17.♖e5!

C3321) 17...♗b4

C3322) 17...♗b6

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6



## 6.♙g5

The Rauzer is regarded as the most serious challenge to the Classical Sicilian, and it has been my usual weapon of choice.

In this chapter we will deal with the sidelines **A)** 6...♙a5 and **B)** 6...g6, followed by the more serious option of **C)** 6...♙d7.

6...e6 is the main line, and is discussed in Chapters 13-19.

6...♙b6 generally transposes to a system covered in the next chapter; you can find this move order discussed briefly on page 184.

6...a6 was covered via the Najdorf move order; see 6...♘c6 on page 9 of the previous volume.

6...h6 7.♙xf6 just leads to a common structure with ...h6 as a wasted move, so serious players hardly ever go for this.

### A) 6...♙a5 7.♙b5

7.♙xf6 gxf6 8.♘b3 ♙g5!? justifies Black's set-up somewhat.



After 9.♘d5 ♖b8 10.f4 ♔g6 Black has scored well in practice, so I would like to take the game in a different direction. The text move is less heavily explored. At first, Black doesn't seem to have much to worry about.

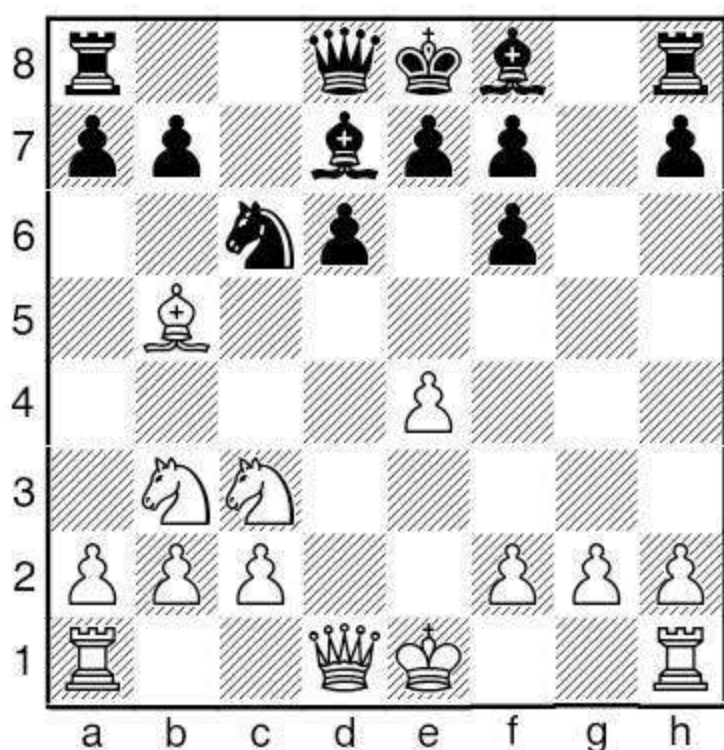
**7...♙d7 8.♘b3 ♔d8**

After 8...♖c7 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♘d5 ♔d8 11.♔h5 e6 12.♘e3 the knight is better on e3 than on c3.

**9.♙xf6**

When I reached this position I transposed to a kind of Scheveningen with 9.♙e2, but the text move is much more in keeping with our repertoire.

**9...gxf6**



**10.♔h5!**

The queen is perfectly placed on h5. It makes it hard for Black to develop, as ...0-0-0 is impossible, while the h8-rook and f8-bishop are restricted as well.

**10...♖g8**

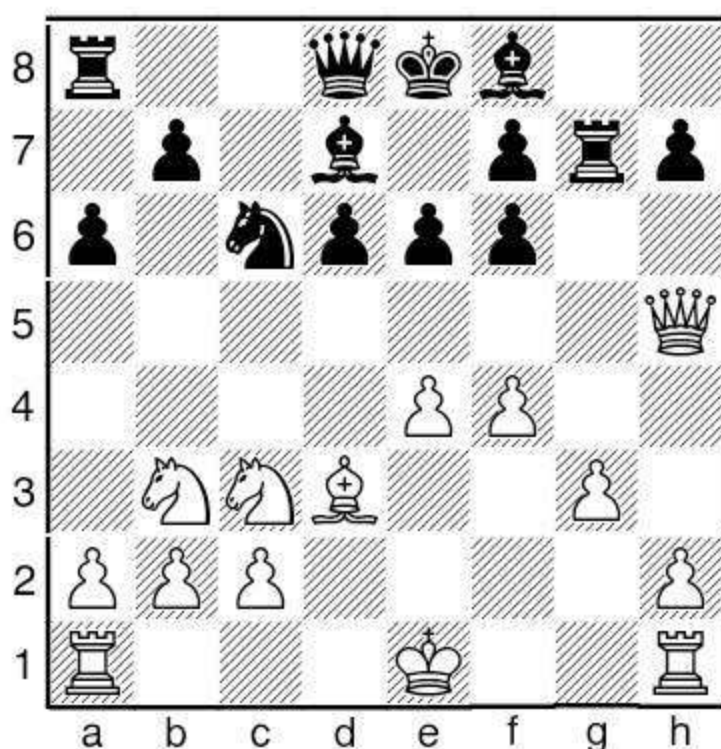
Another game continued: 10...a6 11.♙e2 b5 12.0-0 e6 13.f4 ♖b6† 14.♔h1± Espinosa Aranda – Shanava, Benasque 2012.

### 11.g3 ♖g5

The rook will soon be kicked away from here.

### 12.♔e2 a6 13.♙d3 e6 14.f4 ♖g7 15.♔h5

The queen returns to the perfect square.



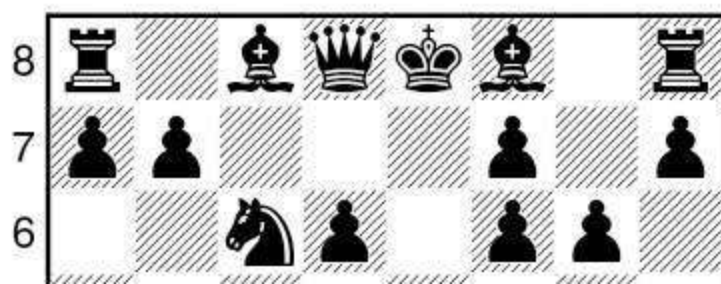
### 15...♔b6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.♔b1±

Topalov – Corral Blanco, Barcelona 2000.

### B) 6...g6

Allowing ♙xf6 does not seem aesthetically appealing, but Black gets an excellent dark-squared bishop. If it were not for the weakness of the d6-pawn, his position would seem perfect. The weakness does exist though and, if White can stop the ...f5 break, Black will have a hard time getting any counterplay.

### 7.♙xf6 exf6





## 8.♙b5!

Creating some disorder in Black's development.

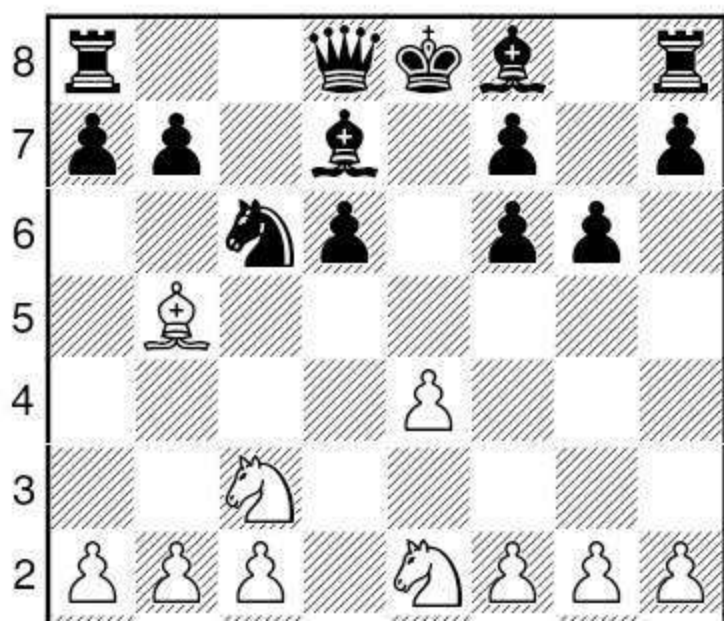
8.♙c4 ♙g7 9.♘db5 used to be played more, but going after the d6-pawn isn't the best strategy – particularly when 9...0-0 10.♙xd6 f5! offers Black surprisingly decent compensation. In a way, by taking the d6-pawn prematurely, we have helped Black by removing his main weakness and giving him compensation with his bishop pair.

## 8...♙d7 9.♘de2!?

Exploiting Black's last move, as the loose d6-pawn means he is unable to put his bishop on g7 for the time being.

9.♙d2 ♙g7 10.0-0-0 0-0 11.♙xc6 (11.♘xc6 ♙xc6 12.♙xd6 ♙b6 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.♙d4 f5! 15.♙xb6 axb6 16.exf5 gxf5 seems good enough for Black to hold) 11...bxc6 (11...♙xc6 12.f4 ♖c8 13.♖he1 ♖e8 14.♙b1 was good for White in Dominguez Perez – Maki, Eilat 2012) 12.♘b3 In Ballas – Stefanatos, Greece 2014, Black could have obtained reasonable compensation with 12...♙e6N 13.♙xd6 ♙b6 intending ...f5.

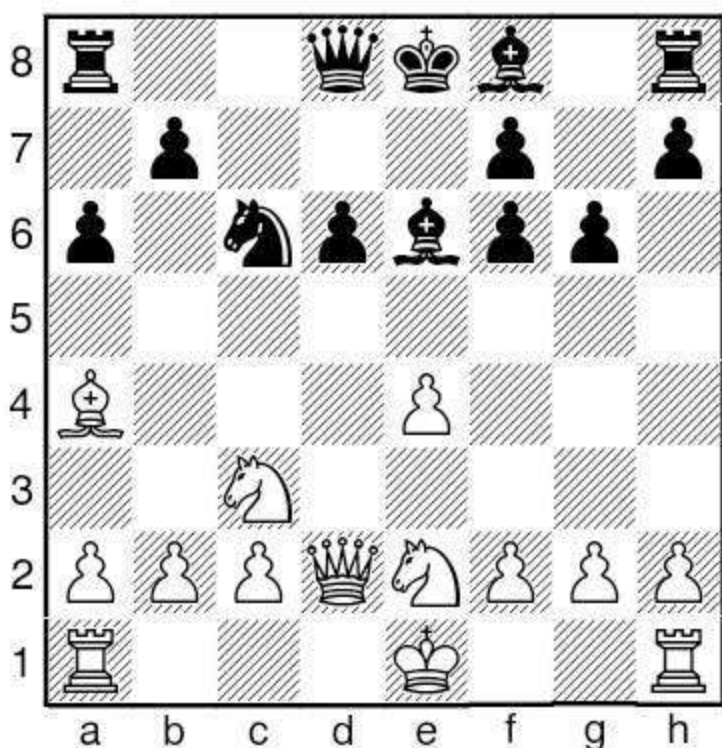
The above line shows that, rather than just trying to win the d6-pawn, White needs to try and restrict Black's development and especially the ...f5 break.





9...♙e6

9...a6?! 10.♙a4 ♙e6 (10...b5 11.♙b3 ♘a5 12.0-0±) The inclusion of ...a6 and ♙a4 favours White for multiple reasons. For one example, attacking the d6-pawn works better here: 11.♙d2 (11.f4!? ♙g7 12.f5∞ is also promising, just like in the main line)

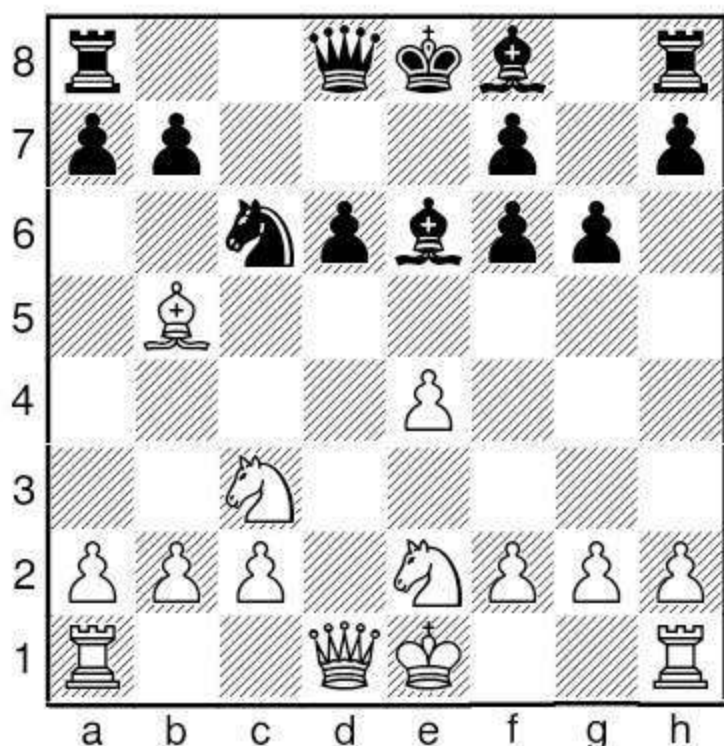


11...♙g7 12.0-0-0 0-0 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.♙xd6 ♙b6 In the analogous position with the pawn on a7, Black would be doing well. However, with the queen unprotected on b6, White can win a second pawn with 15.♘d4! as the reply ...♖ad8 does not win material.

9...♙e7 might be objectively the best try, but this move is not what Black had in mind when he played 6...g6. Essentially he is admitting to having a worse position, as the ...f5 break will not provide much counterplay, even if he finds a suitable moment to play it. The following games show a few ways in which the game may continue. Not all the moves are the most accurate but, frankly, precision doesn't matter too much here, as White's position remains easy to handle:  
 10.♘d5 (10.♙d2 0-0 11.♘g3 ♖c8 12.♘d5 ♙e6 13.♙c4 ♘e5 14.♙b3 ♘c4 15.♘xe7† ♙xe7 16.♙d4 f5 17.0-0-0 ♘a5 18.♙b1±  
 So – Wei Yi, Reykjavik 2013) 10...0-0 11.0-0



11...f5 12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.♘g3 ♕e6 14.c3± Sutovsky – Firat, Jerusalem 2015.



## 10.f4!?

Black's only serious plan for counterplay is ...f5, which will open the position for his bishops while improving his structure. Our plan is simply to play f4-f5 first, killing that idea, and then to target Black's weakened pawns.

## 10...♖g7N

10...f5 runs into the unpleasant 11.♔d4!.

10...a6 11.♖xc6†N seems simplest. (11.♖a4!? can also be considered of course) 11...bxc6 12.f5! Implementing our main idea. 12...gxf5 13.0-0↑ Black's messed-up pawn structure will trouble him for a long time.

## 11.f5 gxf5 12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.♔d5

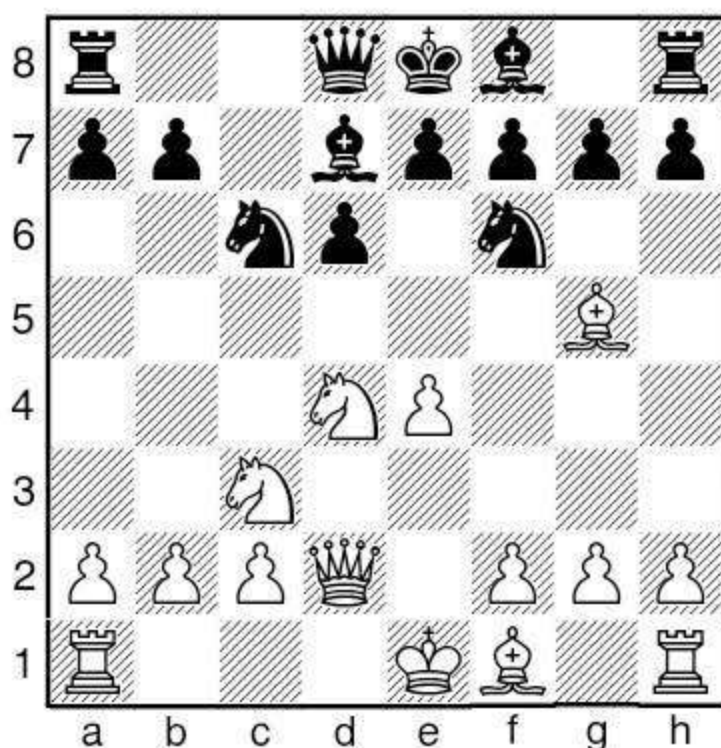
13.♘g3!? also gives White promising compensation: 13...♕e6 14.♘h5 0-0 (14...♖g8!? 15.♔d2☞) 15.♔f3☞



13...♗e6 14.♗xc6† ♔f8 15.♕f3 bxc6 16.0-0-0

Black's position looks quite vulnerable and the two knights have plenty of ways to jump around.

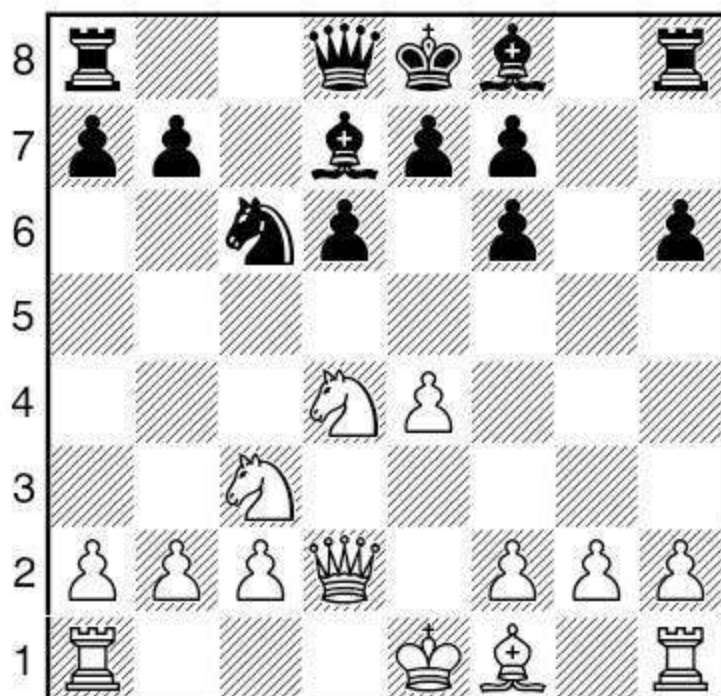
C) 6...♗d7 7.♕d2



We will analyse C1) 7...h6!?, C2) 7...♘xd4 and C3) 7...♖c8.

7...a6 8.0-0-0 e6 leads to Chapters 17-19.

C1) 7...h6!? 8.♗xf6 gxf6





Provoking ♖xf6 is often considered dubious in the Rauzer, because Black risks getting an inferior version of a line where White takes on f6 voluntarily. In this line, however, Black is aiming for an unusual set-up without ...e6. Instead the bishop will go to g7 and, in Black's ideal scenario, he will play ...f5 at a favourable moment. White will try to stop this with either ♘f5 or f4-f5, which leads to interesting blocked positions. Thus, the character of the struggle will be quite different from that of the more popular version of the ...gxf6 Rauzer structure.

## 9.0-0-0

9.♘f5 is an idea which works well in the analogous position after 7...♖c8 8.f4, as shown later. Here it is not so favourable, mainly because Black still has the useful option of long castling. After 9...♔a5 10.♙d3 e6 11.♘e3 a6∞ Black has been doing quite alright.

## 9...♘xd4

9...h5?! allows 10.♘f5! with an improved version for White. After 10...♔a5 11.♔e1! it is already hard for Black to remove the knight, as 11...♙xf5 12.♖d5! gives White a solid edge.

## 10.♔xd4 ♔a5 11.f4

From this position **C11)** 11...♖g8 is sometimes played, but the main line is **C12)** 11...♖c8.

### C11) 11...♖g8



I consider this a slight inaccuracy. Black prepares ...f5, but White can always prevent this with f4-f5. Black would like to counter with ...h5 and ...♖h6(†), but this plan does not combine well with the rook on g8. He can revert to a set-up with ...e6, but this isn't exactly what Black had in mind when playing this line.

## 12.f5

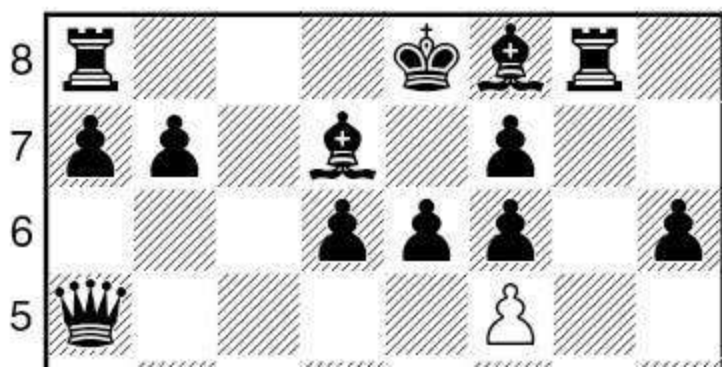
White can consider 12.g3, since 12...f5 13.♗c4 ♗g7 14.e5 ♗c6 15.♔d3! gives him good attacking chances. However, Black can improve with 12...e6 or 12...♖c8.

## 12...e6

We will see a lot more of this structure in Chapters 18 and 19. Here Black has considerably less counterplay than usual, and White has the simple plan of exerting pressure against e6.

## 13.g3!?N

This seems like the most accurate choice. 13.♔b1 is not really required at this point, but it is worth checking the following game all the same. 13...0-0-0 14.g3 ♗b8 15.♗e2! The bishop is heading for h5, showing one of the main drawbacks of the rook on g8. 15...♔e5 A draw was agreed here in Deepan – Dreev, Mumbai 2010, but White's chances were definitely preferable – clearly the reason why the high-level grandmaster offered a draw with Black. White can either retain the queens or play the endgame: 16.♔xe5! (16.♔b4!?±; 16.♔d2±) 16...fxe5 17.♖hf1 ♗e7 18.♗h5 ♗e8 19.b3±





**13...0-0-0 14.♖e2 ♜g5**

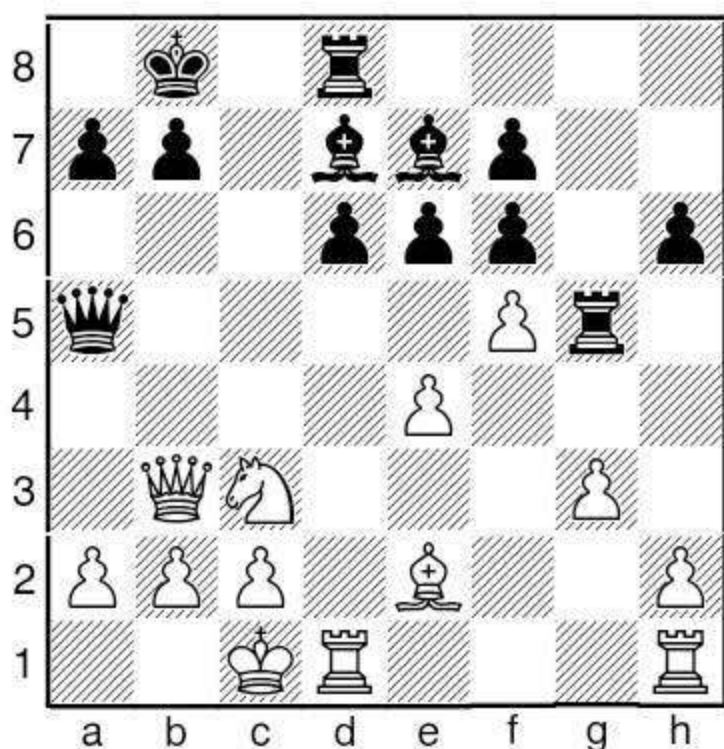
If Black allowed ♖h5 then his position would be extremely passive. But now the rook on g5 is awkwardly placed, and White can continue to exert pressure.

**15.♙c4†!?**

There are many other plans available for White, but I like this one.

**15...♙b8 16.♙b3 ♖e7**

16...a6 is met by 17.♖c4 when the e6-pawn feels the heat. 17...exf5 (17...♜e8 runs into 18.♜hf1± when f6 cannot be defended) 18.♖d5 ♖c8 19.♜hf1±



**17.♖b5!**

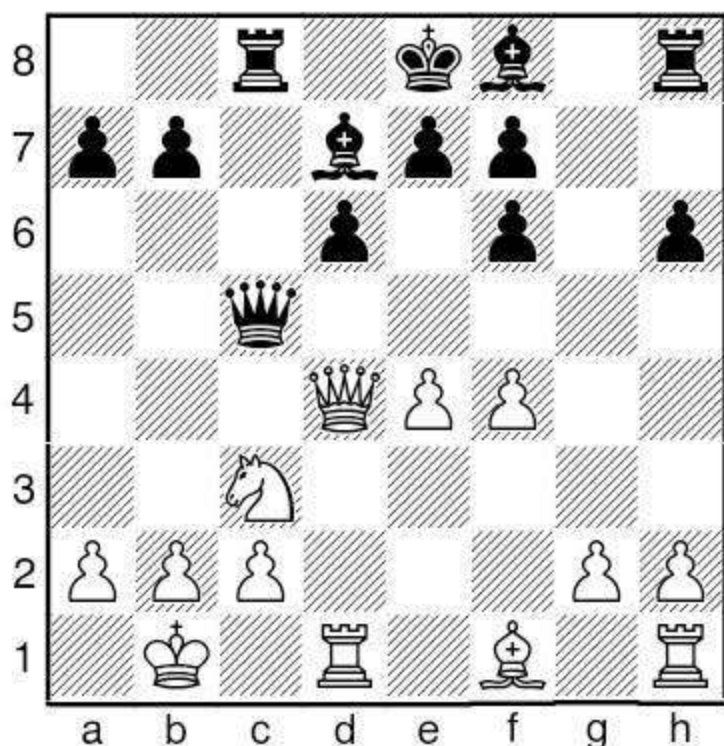
Exchanging bishops greatly benefits White, since the bishop pair is one of Black's biggest trumps.

**17...♙b6 18.♖xd7 ♙xb3 19.axb3 ♜xd7 20.♜he1±**

Without the light-squared bishops, Black faces a difficult endgame. His remaining bishop is poor and the e6-pawn is a serious weakness which can be freely attacked.

## C12) 11...♖c8 12.♔b1 ♕c5

12...♙g7 13.f5 ♕c5 14.♕d3 just transposes to the main line below. This move order enables Black to avoid the 14.♕g3 line mentioned in the notes below, but that doesn't seem such a great option for us in any case.



### 13.♕d3

This seems like the best square for the queen.

It is worth comparing the alternative:

13.♕d2 ♙g7

13...e6 14.e5! is dangerous.

13...f5 14.exf5! ♙xf5 (14...♙g7 15.f6 ♙xf6 16.♘e4)

15.♙b5↑↑ ensures that the black king will be stuck in the centre for a while.

14.f5

14.♘d5 would be nice for White after 14...e6 15.♘e3, but 14...f5! creates a mess.

14...h5!

The queen is not ideally placed on d2. For instance, I would like to attack the h5-pawn so that ...♙h6 will not be possible, but this requires putting the queen on e2. If the queen were on d3, it could move to f3 instead, where it is



obviously better placed since it doesn't hinder the f1-bishop.

13...♖g7

13...e6

This is generally not Black's preferred plan in these positions, and White has more than one good reply.

14.e5!?

14.♙e2± is a normal move which should lead to a typical edge for White. The plan is f4-f5 and ♖h5, so Black will most likely have to play ...h5, after which h2-h4 will keep Black's rook tied to its defensive duty on h8.

14...fxe5

14...f5 15.g4! is horrifyingly dangerous for Black.

15...♙c6 16.gxf5! ♙xh1 17.fxe6 Pawns, pawns everywhere... 17...fxe6 18.♙h3± White was winning the bishop back and his attack soon broke through in Wilk – Trokenheim, Internet 2012.

15.♘e4 ♔a5

In Fressinet – Miroshnichenko, Paris 2001, White took on d6 but did not achieve much. He could have created more problems with:

16.♘f6!†N 16...♔d8 17.♘xd7 ♔xd7 18.f5!

Intending g2-g3 and ♖h3. White has lasting pressure: his king is safer, his bishop is stronger and the e6-pawn will surely fall at some point.

Another important option is:

13...f5 14.exf5! ♙xf5

14...♔xf5 is met by the greedy but effective 15.♔d4! ♖g8 16.♔xa7± as in Inarkiev – Malakhov, Torrelavega 2007.

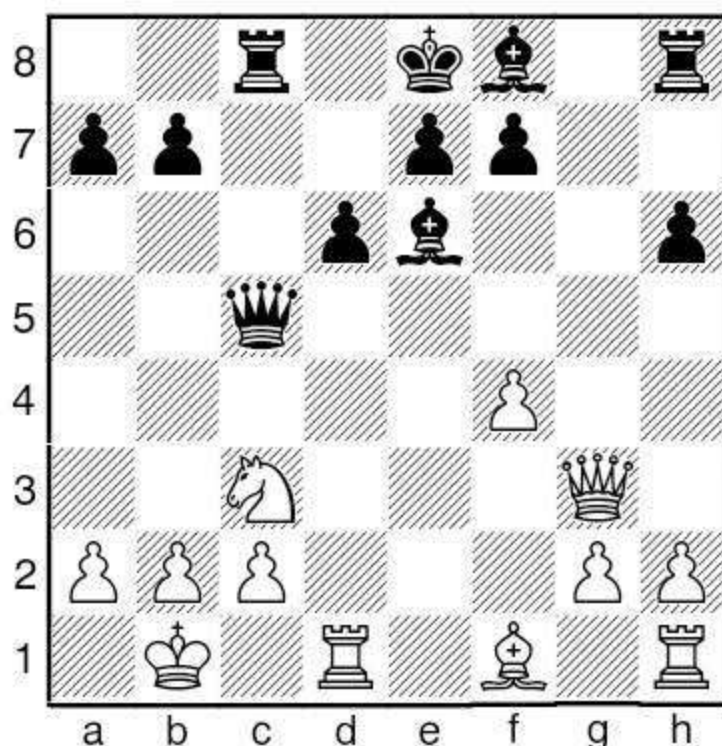
15.♔g3

In playing ...f5 Black was hoping his dark-squared bishop would roar back into the game. Instead it remains stuck on f8, and the opening of the e-file

spells danger for the black king.

15...♖e6

15...♔b4 16.♖d5 ♖e4 17.♔g4! f5 18.♔g6†+- was disastrous for Black in Motylev – Dreev, Lugo 2007. 15...e6N has not yet been played. 16.♖d3± looks like a good reply.



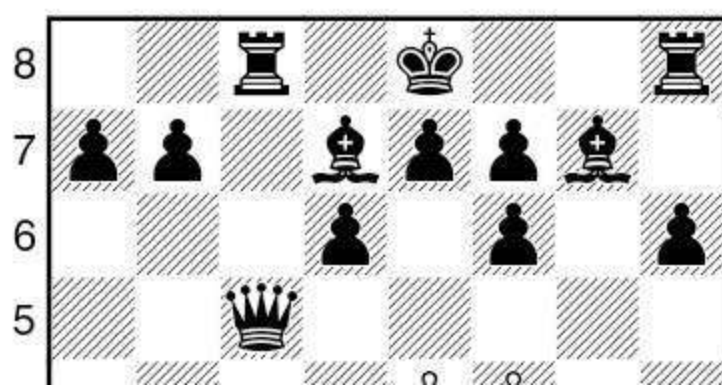
16.♖b5† ♔d8 17.♖a4!? h5 18.♖he1!N

18.♖b3 h4 19.♔d3 ♖xb3 20.axb3 ♖g7 was not at all clear in Papp – Shishkin, Baia Sprie 2012. Black has caught up with development and suddenly the king is looking okay on d8.

The text move is an obvious improvement. White does not hurry to exchange bishops and instead develops his last piece.

18...h4 19.♔f3 ♔c7 20.♖b3 ♖xb3 21.axb3 ♔b8 22.f5±

Black's bishop trouble remains.





## 14.f5!

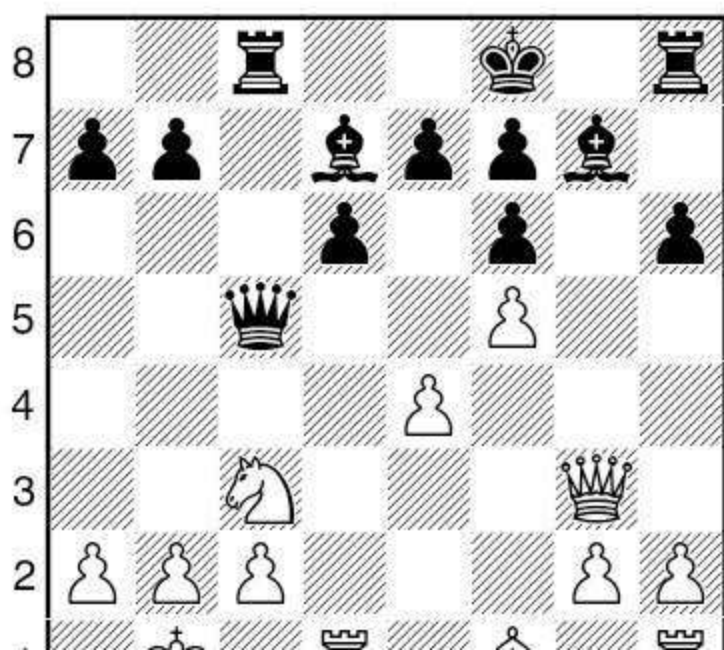
An important moment. The more popular choice has been:

14. ♔g3 ♔f8

Black's last move was forced, but the problem is that White's queen has no further purpose on g3. After the thematic ...h5, the best move is usually ♔f3, which stops ...♗h6 and puts pressure on h5. So the question is: does it really benefit us to have the black king on f8? I don't see any reason why it should. It wasn't as if the king was going to escape anywhere – especially after ...h5, Black can hardly contemplate short castling. Likewise, it is hard to imagine the king making it all the way to b8, as Black will have to worry about pressure on e7 as well as a rook lift along the third rank. So, if the king is going to remain in the centre anyway, why not leave it on e8? This might help White in the event that he goes for an attack with e4-e5, or if his knight gets exchanged on d5 and the e-file is opened.

## 15.f5

15. ♗b5 is worth considering, as exchanging one of Black's bishops is usually desirable. Unfortunately, Black has a concrete idea here: 15... ♗xb5!N 16. ♖d5 ♔c6 17. ♖xb5 f5!∞ The bishop comes back to life.

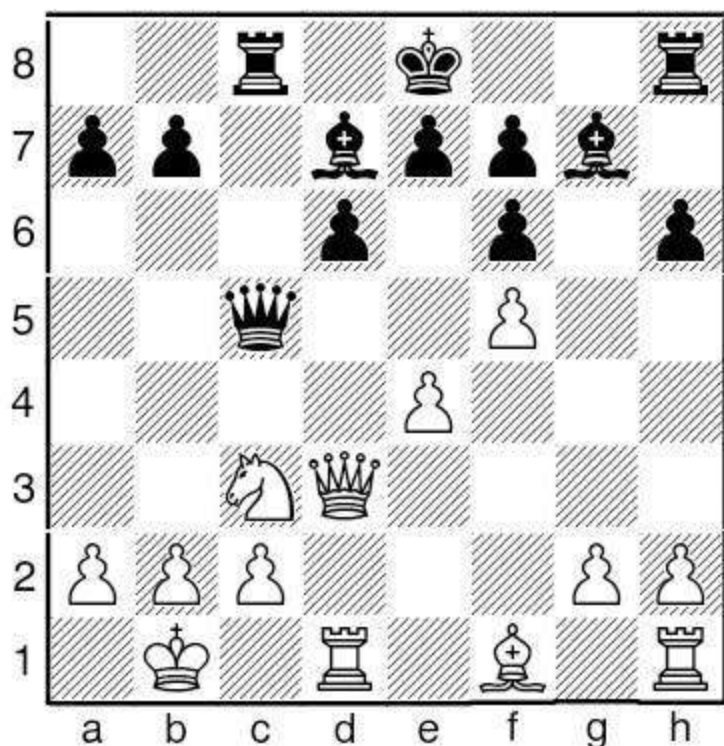


15...♔c6!

Forcing White's bishop to settle for a passive square.

16.♘d3 h5 17.♙f3

Necessary to prevent ...♔h6. Compared with the main line below, Black's king is no worse on f8 and White has failed to exchange the light-squared bishops.



14...h5

14...♙e5

This has been played in a couple of correspondence games but, essentially, Black has just accepted a worse position and tried to fight it out.

15.♘e2±

With ideas of ♔h5 and ♘d5.

15...0-0

15...♖c5 16.♘d5 a5 17.a3 h5 18.♘b6! ♔c6 19.♘f3 0-0 20.g3 e6 21.♖hf1± Riccio – Pauwels, corr. 2007.

Clearly, the combination of ...h5 and ...0-0 is not healthy for Black.

16.♘d5 ♖fe8





## 17.♙h5!N

17.♙f3 was a less energetic choice in Fagerstrom – Strautins, corr. 2009. Black continued to play passively but White didn't show much either, and it ended in a draw.

The text is much more thematic – the bishop is ideally placed on h5. A sample line to show White's plan is:

17...♙c6 18.♖hf1 b5 19.♙f3! a5 20.♙g4

Intending ♖f3-g3. Black seems horribly stuck, since the king can't move due to the pressure on f7.

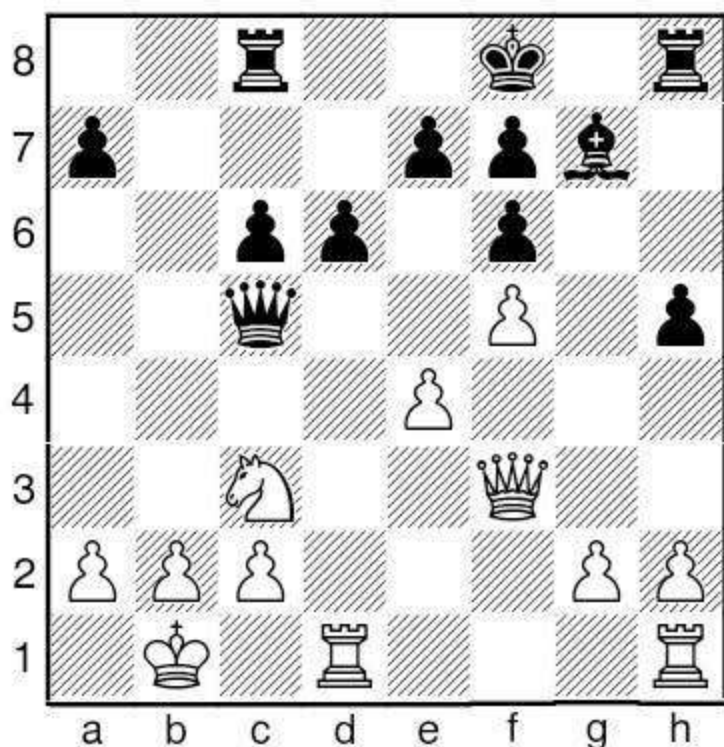
## 15.♙f3

As mentioned earlier, this is a typical reaction to Black's last move. The queen makes way for the bishop while preventing Black's bishop from going to h6.

15.♙e2 h4 16.♙h3 ♙c6 17.♙g4 ♔f8 is not so convincing.

## 15...h4

15...♙c6 can be met by 16.♙b5!, just as in the main line. 16...♔f8N is a sensible reply, but this only emphasizes that we were right not to force the king to go here earlier. 17.♙xc6 bxc6



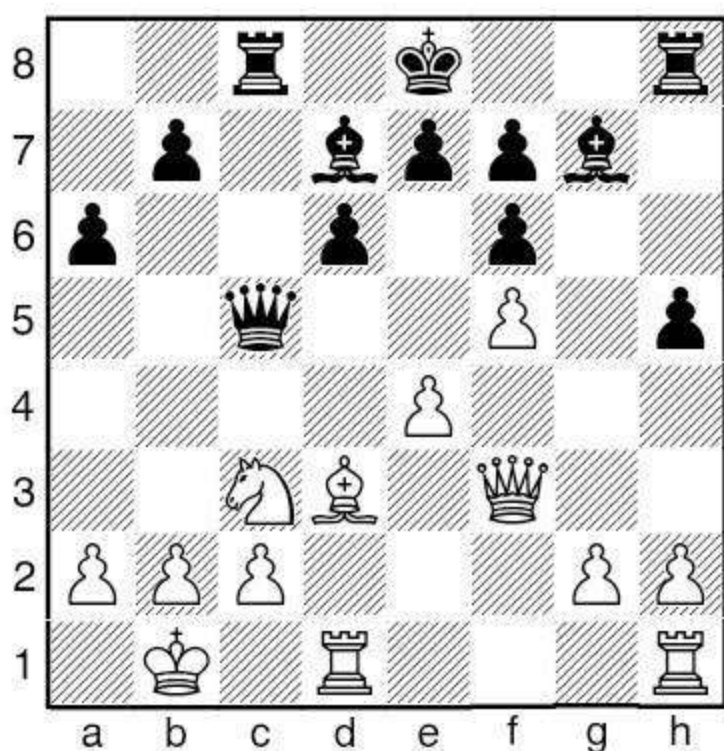
18.e5! ♖xe5 (18...dxe5 19.♔d3 is not at all appetizing for Black) 19.♘d5! The same idea can be found in the main line below. Here the queen can save itself with 19...e6 20.♖he1 ♕xf5 21.♕xf5 exf5, but after 22.♘e7± the endgame is deeply unpleasant for Black.

15...a6!?

This avoids the tactical problems seen in the main line, but it is rather slow.

16.♔d3

White can proceed with the simple plan of ♖he1 and ♘d5. If Black takes the knight then exd5 will leave us with considerable pressure along the e-file and on the kingside, while Black's bishop faces a bleak future. If Black ignores the knight, he will be stuck without any real plan.



16...♔c6N

16...e6?! can be met calmly with 17.♘e2±. Eventually we will take on e6, and Black has weakened his position far too much.

16...h4 was played in Heer – Cardoso Garcia, corr. 2014. After 17.♖he1 the position resembles the line



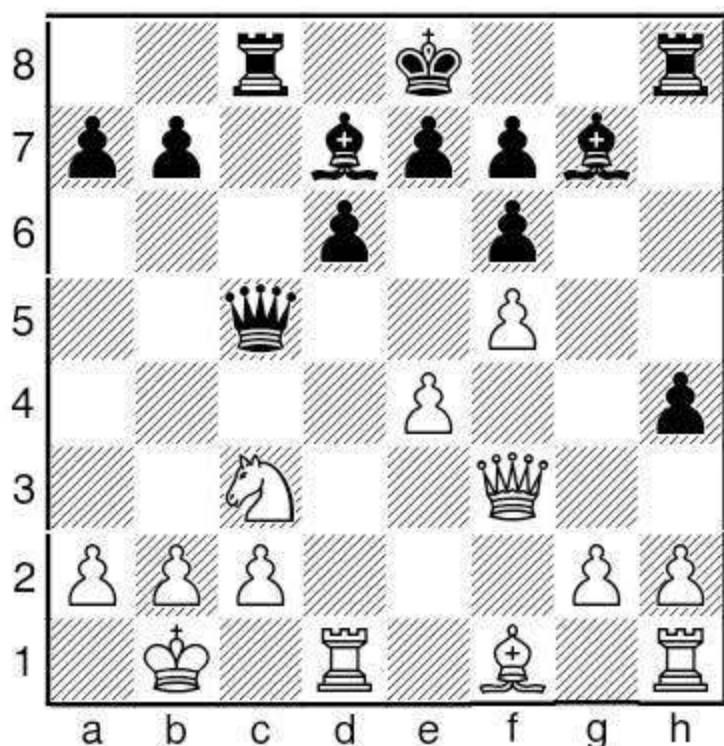
below, and might easily transpose after a few moves.

17.♖he1 h4 18.♘d5 b5

18...♔f8 19.c4±

19.♙g4 ♔f8 20.c3±

White can continue improving with moves like ♖c2-b3 until it's time to strike.



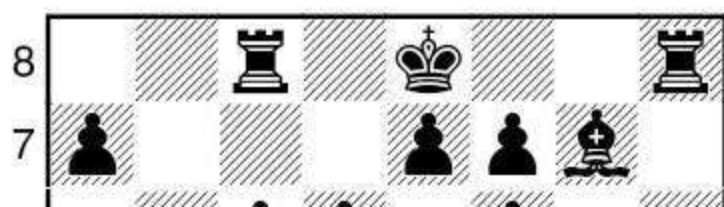
16.♖b5! ♖c6

16...♖xb5 17.♖d5 ♙c6 18.♖xb5 leads to a typical scenario with good knight against bad bishop, where Black is destined to suffer for a long time.

17.♖xc6†N

17.♖d5 led to an eventual victory for White in Zidu – Degerhammar, corr. 2009, but this seems to me like sophisticated manoeuvring without any obvious purpose. Instead I found a more direct way to exploit Black's lack of coordination.

17...bxc6



## 18.e5!

A pawn is a small price to pay to open the game for White's pieces.

## 18...♔xe5

18...fxe5? 19.♘e4 ♚b6 20.f6 gives White a crushing attack.

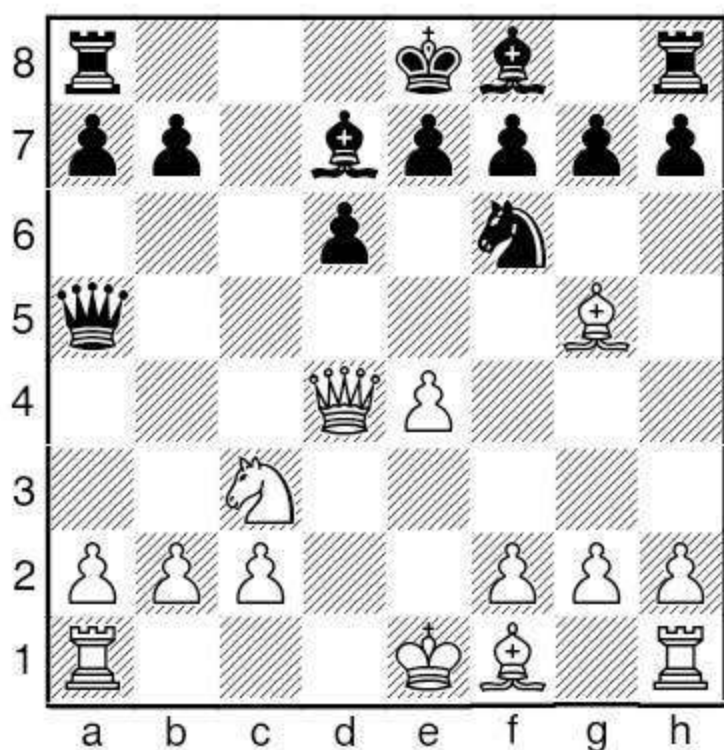
After 18...dxe5 19.♚g4 ♔f8 20.♖d3± White can invade along the d-file.

18...d5 avoids an immediate disaster, but 19.e6!? fxe6 20.fxe6 still looks highly unpleasant for Black.

## 19.♘d5!±

The key tactical point. Black must give up his queen, but he can hardly hope for full compensation with his king in the centre and his pieces uncoordinated.

### C2) 7...♘xd4 8.♚xd4 ♚a5



Black more commonly plays these moves with ...♖c8 and f2-f4 included, but here he tries to be tricky with the move order.

## 9.♙d2!



Exploiting the misplaced queen.

9.f4 offers a transposition to the aforementioned line, but Black gets an additional option: 9...e6 10.0-0-0 ♖e7

Somehow, bizarrely enough, this set-up is not possible in the rest of the Rauzer, because Black always has to play ...a6 at a crucial moment. Here he has avoided spending a tempo on that move, and after the typical 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 he has the nice idea of 12...0-0-0!?, as championed by Istvan Csom in the early 1970s. This could be analysed more, but I would rather avoid the issue altogether.

### 9...♖c8

This has been the highest-scoring of several options.

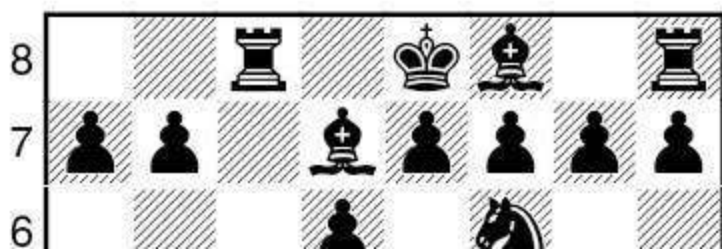
9...♖c5? 10.♖xc5 dxc5 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♘b5! 0-0-0 13.♘xa7† gave White a clear advantage in Krogius – Szilagyi, Polanica Zdroj 1969.

9...a6?! is too slow, and 10.♘d5 ♔d8 11.♘b6 e5 12.♖e3 ♖b8 13.f3 ♖e7 14.♖c4 0-0 15.0-0-0± was great for White in Browne – Radulov, Hastings 1972.

9...♖e5!? has hardly ever been played, but is not such a bad move. However, White has a nice reply in 10.♖b4!N 10...b6 11.♖b5± with an edge.

9...e5 has been the most popular choice. Retreating the queen to d3 or e3 is perfectly reasonable but I like Almasi's idea of posting it on the queenside: 10.♖c4! ♖c8 (10...♖b6?! 11.♖e3 ♖c6 12.♖b3 a6? 13.♖c4+– Almasi – El Gindy, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011)

11.♖b3 ♖c7 Preventing ♖c4, but White still gets a nice position: 12.♖g5 ♖e7 Matulovic – Robatsch, Borovo 1980. 13.♖b5N±



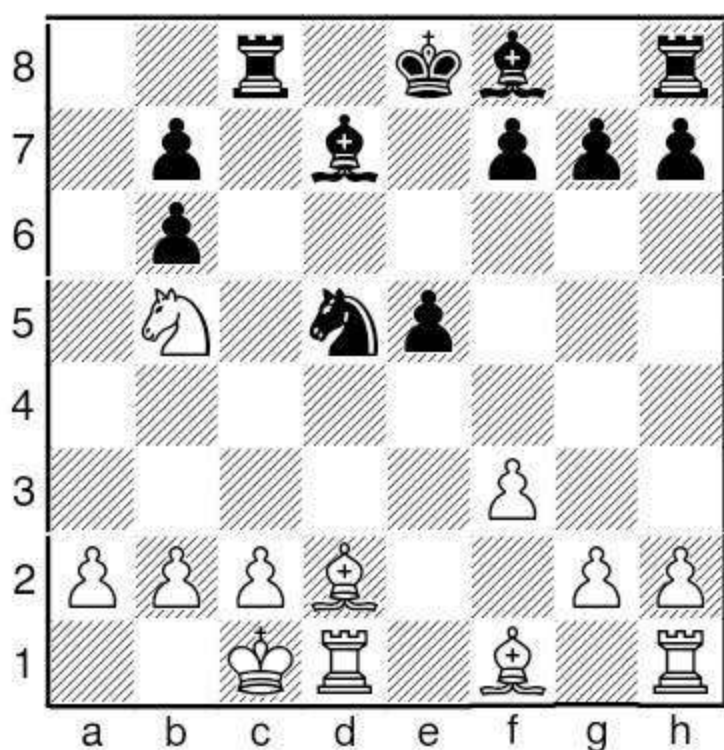
## 10. ♖b5!

Forcing Black to accept an ugly pawn structure, after which White can slowly improve his position.

## 10... ♖b6 11. ♖xb6 axb6 12. f3 g6

12... ♖xc2 runs into 13. ♕c3 and, sooner or later, the rook will perish.

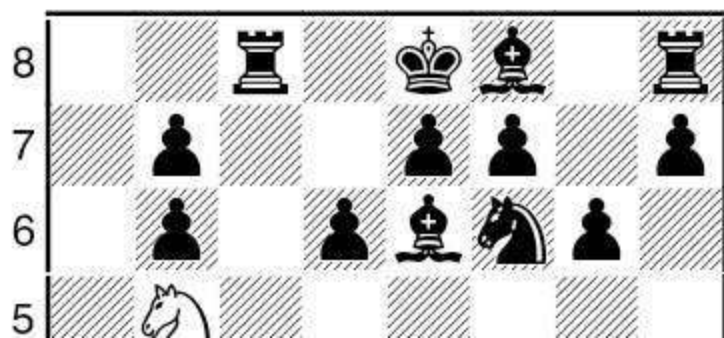
12... e5 13. 0-0-0 d5 14. exd5 ♘xd5 occurred in Tseshkovsky – Lerner, Minsk 1979, when White should have continued:



15. ♖e1! N 15... f6 16. f4 ♘b4 17. ♘d4 ♕c5 (17... ♘xa2† 18. ♖b1±)  
18. fxe5 ♘xa2† 19. ♖b1 ♕xd4 20. exf6† ♖d8 21. fxg7 ♕xg7  
22. ♖xa2±

## 13. 0-0-0 ♕e6

We have been following Liss – Kogan, Rishon LeZion 1995. White can choose between a few different set-ups.





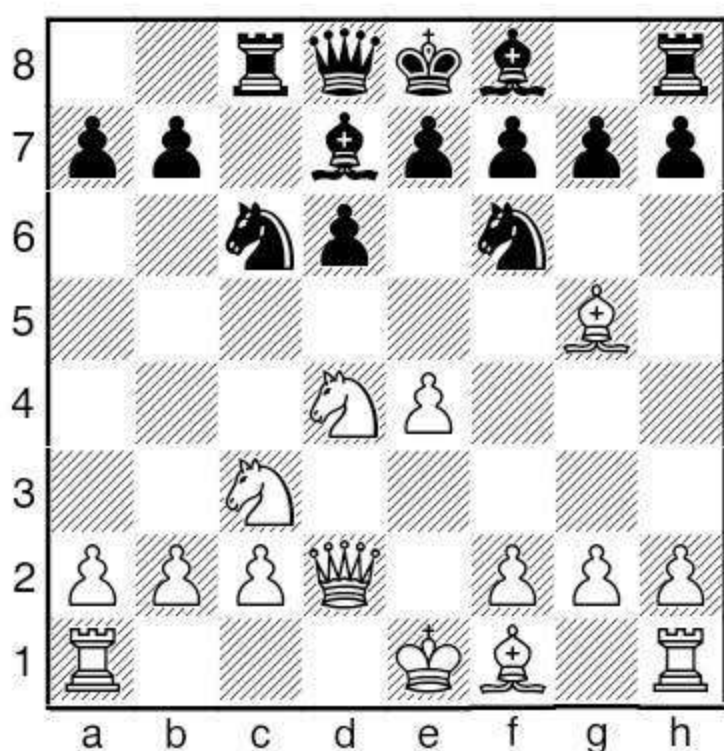
## 14.b3N

This seems logical to me, although 14.♘c3N± is a good alternative.

14...♙g7 15.♙e3 ♘d7 16.♘d4±

White's better structure offers him a long-term edge.

### C3) 7...♙c8



This is the main line by far.

## 8.f4

8.0-0-0 has been more popular, but the text move gives White the important option of a quick e4-e5 in some lines.

We will analyse C31) 8...♘g4!?, C32) 8...h6 and C33) 8...♘xd4.

### C31) 8...♘g4!?

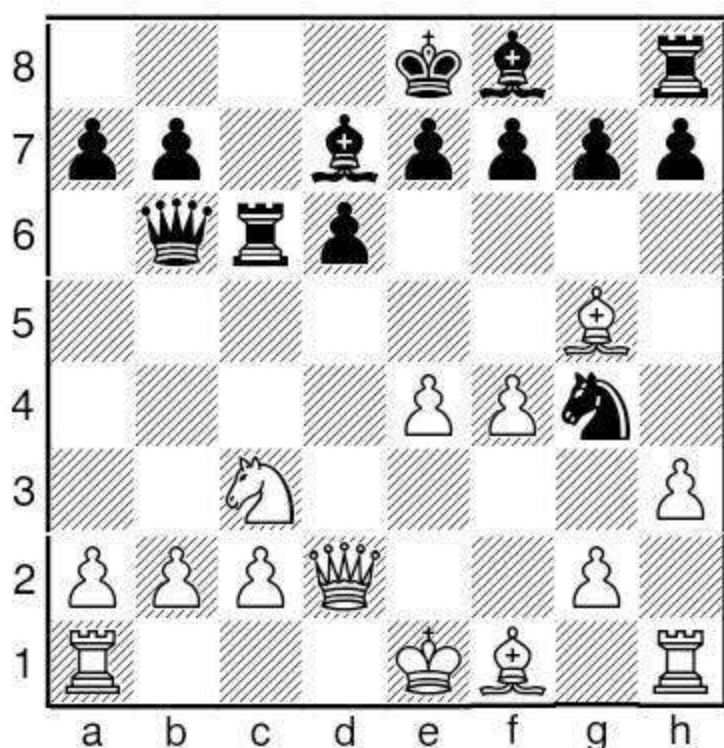
This was introduced by Miroshnichenko in 2010 but it has not been played much since, which is a little surprising, because White needs to show some accuracy to prove an advantage.

## 9.h3

After 9.♘xc6 ♙xc6 (9...♖xc6?! 10.♙b5) 10.♙e2 ♘f6 11.♙xf6 gxf6 it is not clear who has got the better version of this thematic structure. White may be able to claim an edge, but the following game worked out quite well for Black: 12.0-0-0 ♙a5 13.♖b1 ♙c5 14.f5 h5 15.♙d3 h4 16.♖hf1 ♙h6 17.♖f3 ♙g5∞  
Fluvia Poyatos – Jerez Perez, Leon 2012.

The text move is critical, but now Black resorts to some ingenious ideas.

## 9...♙b6 10.♘xc6 ♖xc6



## 11.♙b5!

11.0-0-0!?N 11...♘f2 12.♘d5 ♙c5 13.b4 ♙xc2† 14.♙xc2 ♖xc2† 15.♙xc2 ♘xh1 is unclear; White is unable to trap the knight in the corner, but his huge lead in development still offers some compensation for the material.

## 11...♘e3 12.♙xc6 ♙xc6

This is another critical position.

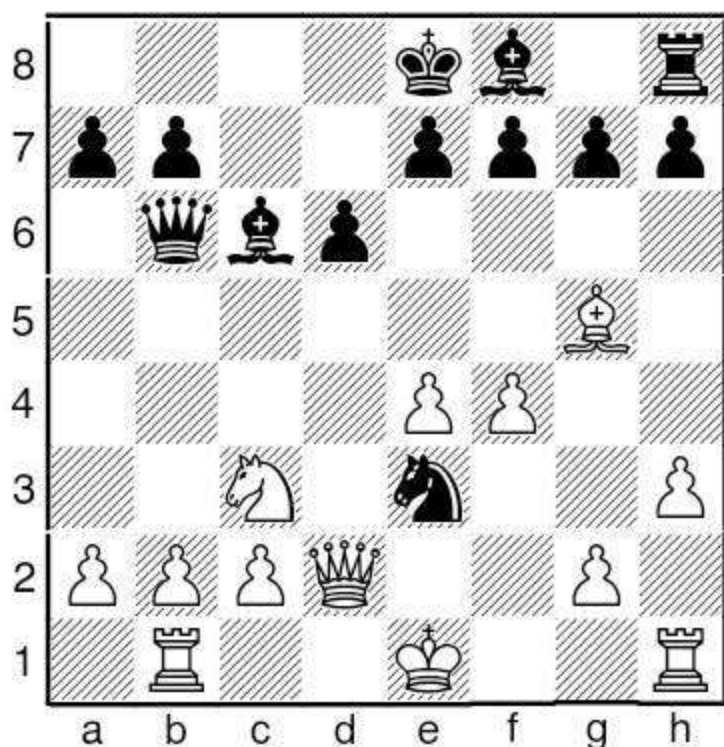
## 13.♖b1!

Finally this novelty was played last year. It not only



protects the b2-pawn, but also prepares b4-b5. The knight on e3 is really annoying, so we should have a clear plan to get rid of it.

13.f5 ♘c4 14.♔d3 ♘xb2 15.♔e2 g6 gave White compensation but no advantage in Solak – Miroshnichenko, Konya 2010.



### 13...g6N

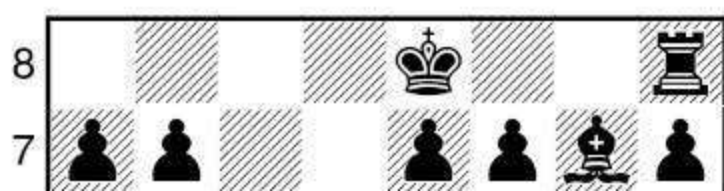
This is Black's best attempt.

After 13...♘c4 14.♔f2 h6 15.♙h4 ♔e3† 16.♔xe3 ♘xe3 17.♔f2+– White was ahead in both material and development in Fernandez de La Vara, – Miranda Rodriguez, Havana 2014.

### 14.b4! ♙g7

14...a6 15.♔e2! ♘c4 16.♔d3 is excellent for White.

Trying to improve on the main line by throwing in 14...h6 15.♙h4 before 15...♙g7 allows White to change plans with strong effect: 16.♙f2! ♘xg2† (16...♙d4 17.♔e2+–) 17.♔f1 ♔c7 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.exd5 ♙c3 20.♔c1 and the knight is trapped.



**15.♔e2! ♘xg2**

15...♞c4 16.♚d3 ♞a3 17.♖b3±

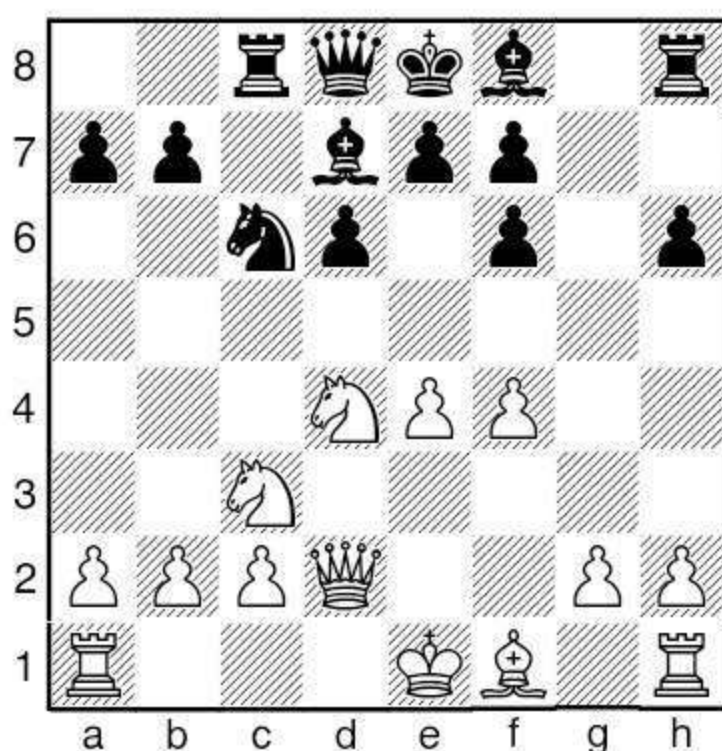
**16.b5 f6**

16...♙d7 17.♞d5 ♚c5 18.♔f3±

**17.bxc6 ♚xc6 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♞d5±**

White should be able to convert his material advantage with careful play.

**C32) 8...h6 9.♙xf6 gxf6**



This has been played in a lot of games, but it has mostly been abandoned by GMs in recent years, as players started realizing 7...h6 is a more flexible move order which keeps the option of ...0-0-0 alive.

**10.♞f5!**

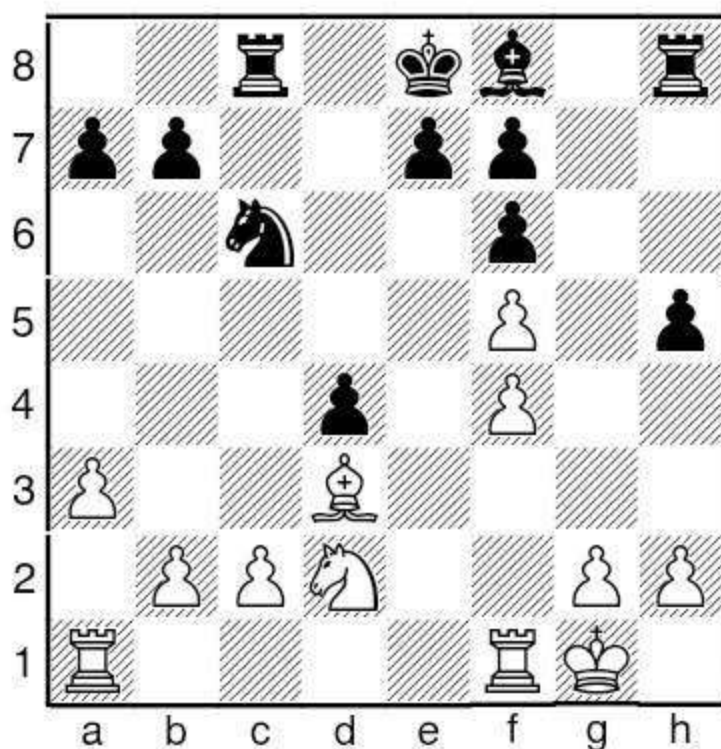
10.0-0-0 transposes to the earlier variation C1, but the text move is a more ambitious attempt to exploit Black's move order.

**10...♚a5**

10...♙xf5 11.exf5 has only occurred a few times. One



example continued: 11...♔a5 12.♙d3 d5 13.a3 h5 14.0-0 d4  
15.♘e4 ♚xd2 16.♘xd2

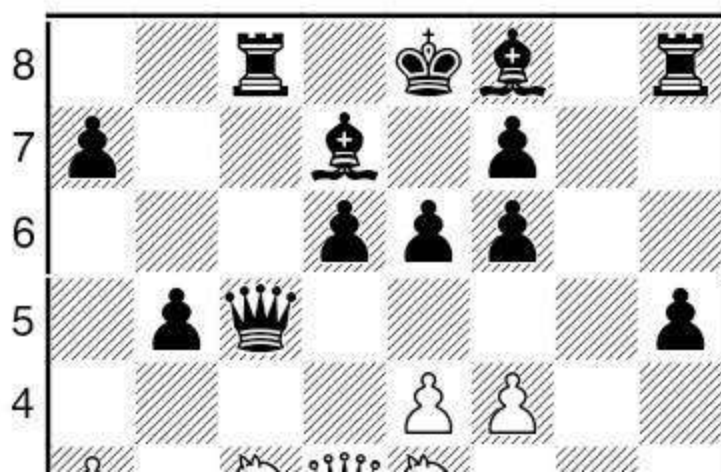


16...e5 17.fxe5 fxe5 18.♖ac1 ♔d7 19.♙c4 ♘d8 20.♙b3 ♙c5  
21.♘e4± Black remained under pressure in Arslanov –  
Iljushin, Kostroma 2010.

11.♙d3 ♘b4 12.a3 ♘xd3† 13.♚xd3 e6 14.♘e3 ♚c5 15.0-0-0!?  
15.0-0 is also good.

15...h5 16.♗he1 b5?!

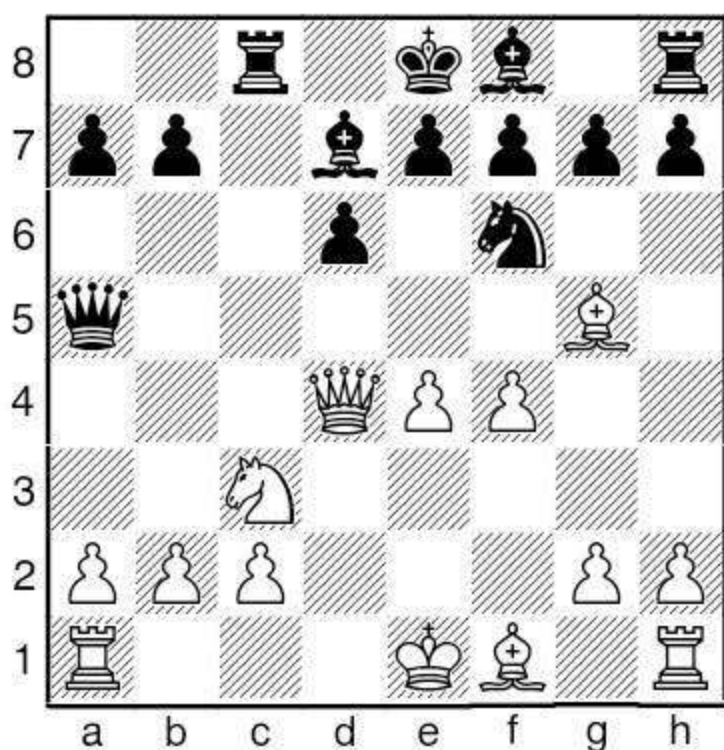
Overlooking White's next move. Black should try  
something else, but I will not spend time discussing  
alternatives as the whole variation is out of favour from  
Black's perspective these days.



17.e5! f5 18.exd6 ♔d8 19.♔b1±

Vocaturo – Atakisi, Rhodes 2013.

C33) 8...♘xd4 9.♙xd4 ♕a5



This used to be considered the main line of the 6...♗d7 system, but its best days seem to be in the past. In recent games Black has struggled to find equality and there are no signs of a comeback.

10.e5

We will analyse C331) 10...♖xc3 and C332) 10...dxe5.

10...♘e4?? loses a piece to 11.b4!. (Instead 11.♙xe4 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 transposes to variation C331 below, and was the actual move order of the Cornford – Jensen game.)

After 10...♘g4? 11.exd6 f6 12.0-0-0! Black was already close to being busted in Kabanov – Chernyshov, Belgorod 2008.

C331) 10...♖xc3

Shanava managed to hold Safarli with this move in 2010, but it has seldom been seen since. Of course, just giving



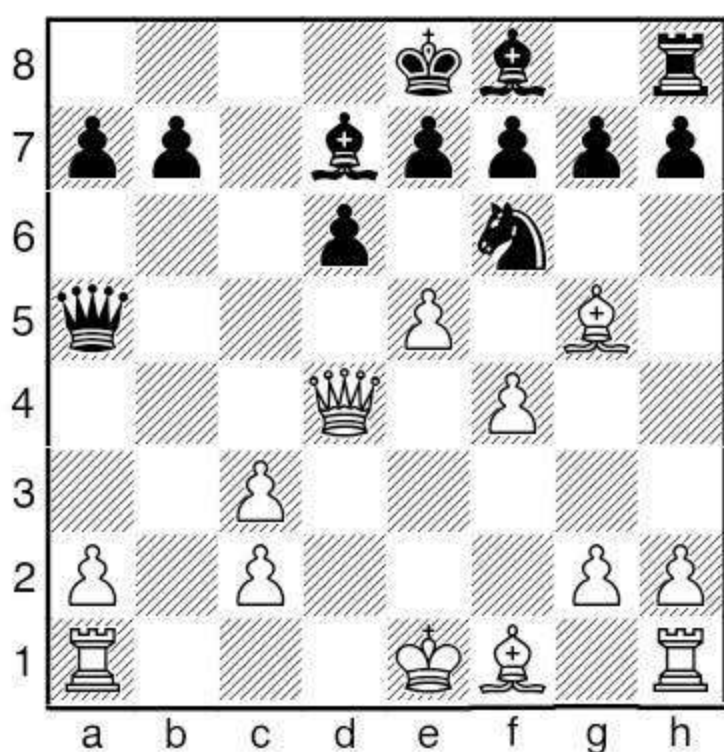
away an exchange and trying to hold the endgame isn't everybody's idea of fun, but White's task is also not easy. Fortunately we have a stronger move available.

## 11.bxc3!

Best, although it would not be an easy decision for an unprepared player.

The aforementioned game continued: 11.♔xc3 ♔xc3†  
12.bxc3 ♞e4 13.exd6 e6 14.♙e7 ♙xe7 15.dxe7 ♞xc3 16.♙d3  
♙xe7 17.♔d2 ♞a4 18.♖hb1 ♙c6 19.♖b4 ♖d8

Safarli – Shanava, Dubai 2010. White is better of course, but a long struggle lies ahead. In certain lines I would happily settle for this type of advantage, but not when we have a clearly superior alternative.



## 11...♞e4N

11...♞d5 also fails to solve Black's problems: 12.exd6 f6  
(12...e6 13.f5 is strong, for instance: 13...♔xc3†N 14.♔xc3  
♞xc3 15.fxe6 ♙xe6 16.♙f4±) 13.♙c4 ♞xc3 (13...e6N 14.f5 ♙xd6  
15.♙d2±)

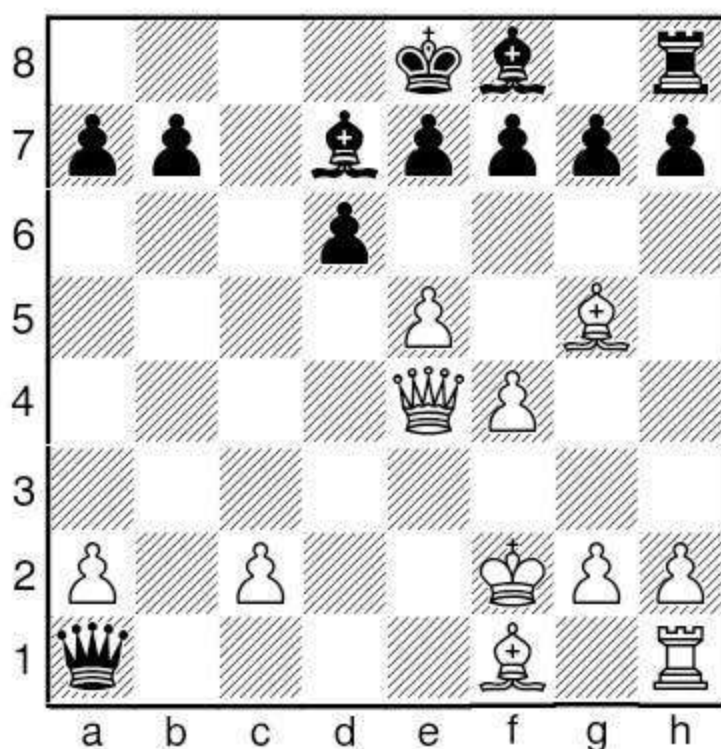


14.0-0! fxg5 (14...b5 15.♖ae1→) 15.♖ae1 ♖b6 16.♕xb6 axb6 17.♖f3 White won a wonderful game in Shabalov – Van der Weide, Willemstad 2003.

The text move has not been played in this exact position, but it transposes to an existing game after White's next move.

**12.♕xe4! ♖xc3† 13.♔f2 ♖xa1**

At this point White has a huge improvement over Cornford – Jensen, Auckland 1977.



**14.♗b5!N**

14.exd6 f6!N 15.♗b5 ♖b2! is not so easy.

**14...♖b2**

14...♖xh1? 15.♕xb7 wins immediately.

14...♖c3 15.♗xd7† ♔xd7 16.♕xb7† ♖c7 17.♖b1 ♖xb7 18.♖xb7† ♔e6 19.♖xa7± leaves Black facing a difficult endgame.

**15.♕xb7 ♖xc2† 16.♔g3**





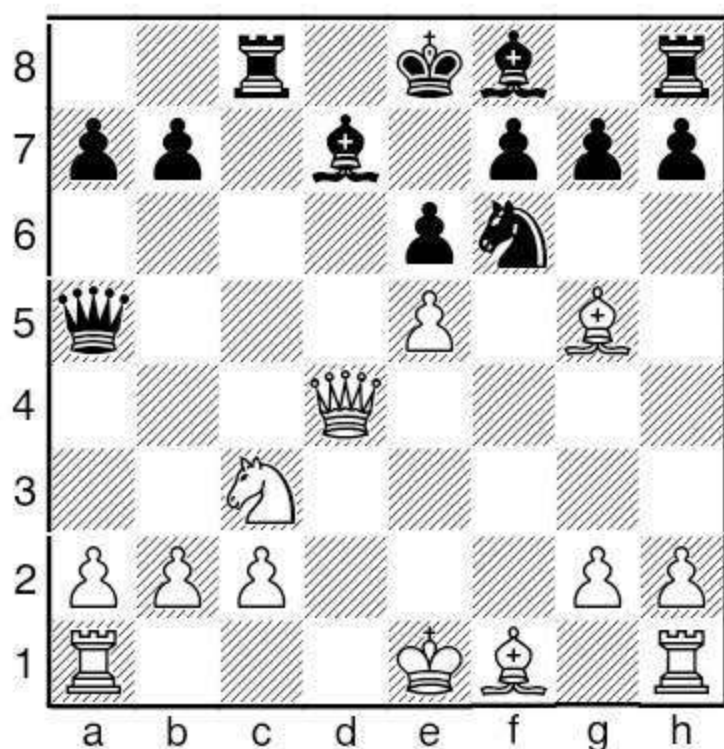
## 16...♙xb5

16...♙c3† 17.♔h4! might appear dodgy, but Black is simply getting mated. 17...♙xb5 18.♙xb5† ♔d8 19.♖d1 f6 20.e6 fxg5† 21.fxg5 ♙c8 22.♖c1+–

## 17.♙xb5† ♔d8 18.♙b8† ♔d7 19.♙b7† ♔d8 20.♖b1

Black's position is virtually impossible to defend.

## C332) 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 e6



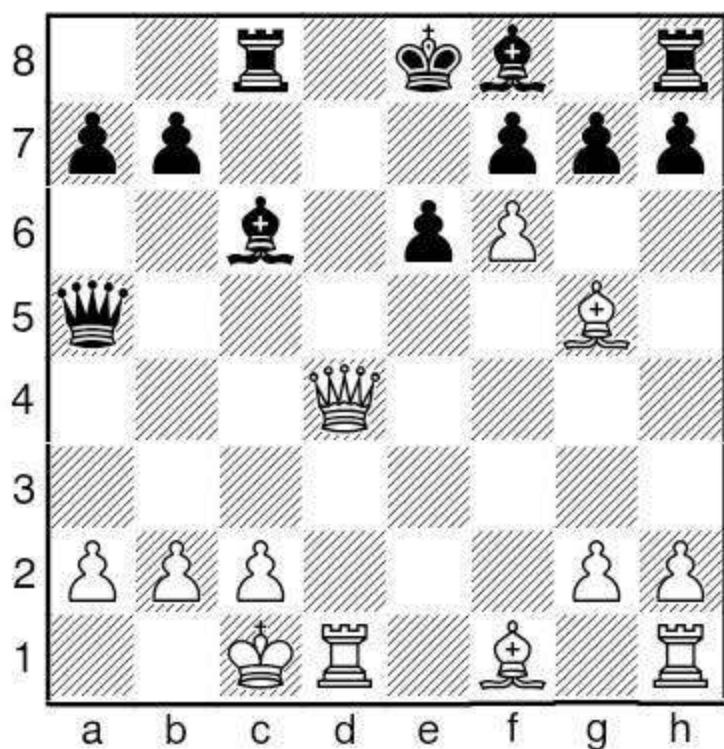
Black utilizes the pin along the fifth rank. This position has occurred in a few hundred games, but the present outlook is bleak for Black.

## 12.0-0-0 ♙c6

Nobody really plays 12...♖xc3 anymore, because of the well-known refutation: 13.♙d2! ♙c5 14.♙xc3 ♙xd4 15.♙xa5 ♙xe5 16.♙b5! ♙d5 17.c4 ♙xb5 18.cxd5± Cabrera – Plaskett, La Roda 2013.

## 13.♙b5 ♙xb5 14.exf6 ♙c6

14...♙a4 backfires after: 15.♙d2! ♖xc2† 16.♔b1 ♖xd2 17.♖xd2 gxh6 18.♙d3 ♙c6 19.♖hd1 ♙e7 20.♙e4± Videki –



### 15.h4 g6

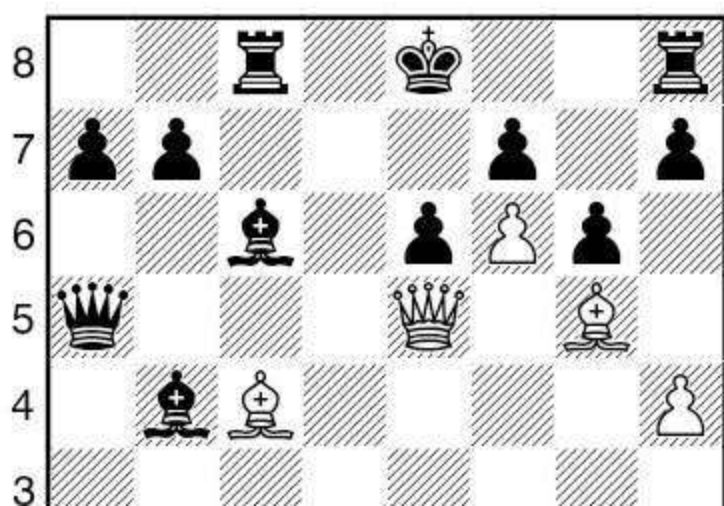
15...♖c5? runs into 16.♔e5 g6 17.h5 and Black's position collapses.

### 16.♖c4 ♖c5 17.♔e5!

This is the key move, which has spelt the downfall of this line from Black's point of view. 17.♔g4 h5 18.♔g3 is less convincing, for reasons explained in the notes to variation C3322 below.

We have reached a final division where Black can choose between **C3321)** 17...♖b4 and **C3322)** 17...♖b6.

### C3321) 17...♖b4





## 18. ♔e2!

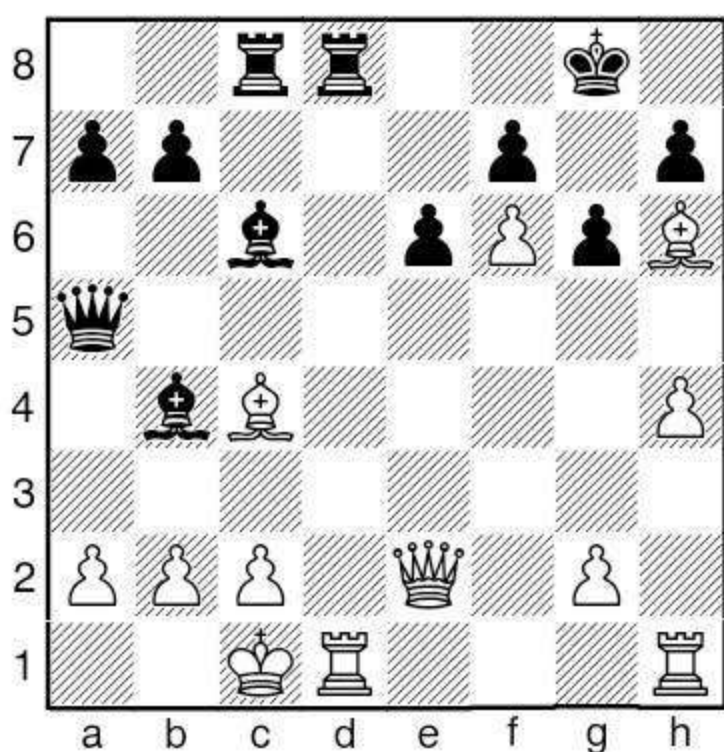
18. ♔e3 has been played by Grischuk, but the text move is more precise.

## 18... 0-0 19. ♖h6 ♜fd8

19... ♜fe8?! 20.h5 is too dangerous for Black.

19... ♖xg2? 20.h5! ♖xh1 21.hxg6 hxg6 22. ♜xh1 gives White a winning attack.

I also considered 19... ♖b5N. This is a reasonable attempt to complicate matters, but Black's attack is too slow: 20. ♖xf8 (20. ♖xb5 ♜xa2) 20... ♖xf8 (20... ♖xc4 21. ♖xb4 ♜xb4 22. ♔d2+–) 21. ♖xb5 ♜xa2 22. ♔d2! ♜xb2 23. ♖d3+– White's king should easily escape.



## 20. ♔xe6!

This is the point behind White's earlier play.

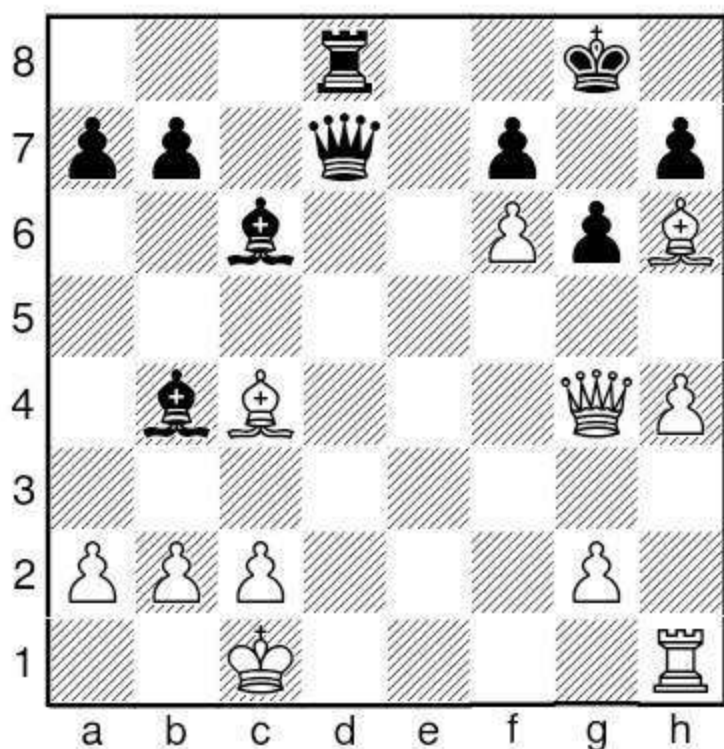
20.h5 ♖f8! 21. ♖xf8 ♜g5† 22. ♔b1 ♜xd1† 23. ♜xd1 ♜xf8 is not at all clear.

## 20... ♔c7 21. ♜xd8†

21. ♔g4? ♖d7! 22. ♜xd7 ♜xd7+

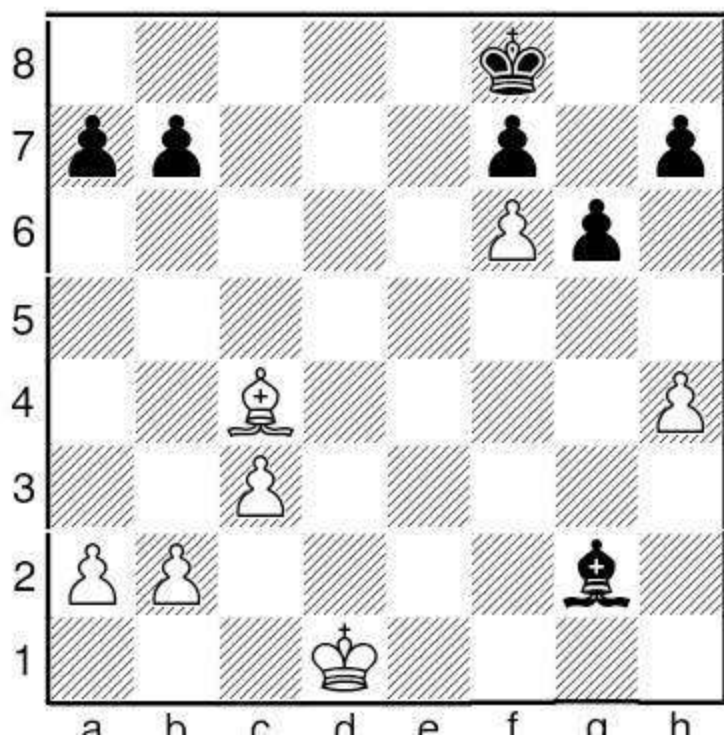
21...♖xd8 22.♔g4 ♚d7

22...♙xg2? 23.h5 wins.



23.♔xd7 ♖xd7 24.c3 ♙f8 25.♙xf8 ♔xf8 26.♖d1! ♖xd1†  
27.♔xd1 ♙xg2

Despite the simplifications and equal material, the endgame is unpleasant for Black, and possibly just losing outright. White's king has an easy path to e5, while Black's is just stuck. His kingside majority can easily be halted by White's king, but White's eventual queenside advance will be harder to stop.





## 28.♔e2

This seems like the most precise to me, although 28.♔d2 ♟h3 29.♟d5! b6 30.♟c6 was also good enough to win in Smirnov – Dubov, Sochi 2012.

## 28...♟h3

28...h6 29.♔e3 g5 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♔d4 ♔g8 32.♔e5+–

28...♔e8 29.♔e3 ♟c6 30.♔f4 b5 31.♟b3 a5 32.a3 ♔f8 33.♔e5+–

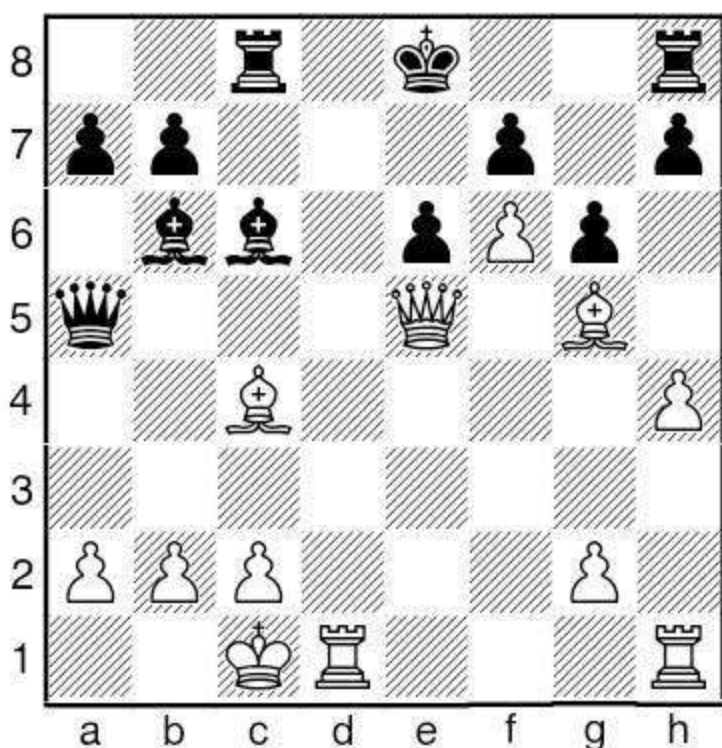
## 29.♟d5! b6 30.♟c6!

30.♔d3 ♟e6 31.♔d4 is good for White, but the text move is much stronger. Black's king is caged and the c-pawn will decide the game.

30...h6 31.♔e3 g5 32.h5 ♟g4 33.b4 ♟xh5 34.♟d7 ♟d1 35.c4 h5 36.c5 bxc5 37.bxc5 g4 38.♔f4+–

Black soon had to resign in Bodnaruk – Kovalevskaya, Tyumen 2012.

## C3322) 17...♟b6



## 18.♔d6!

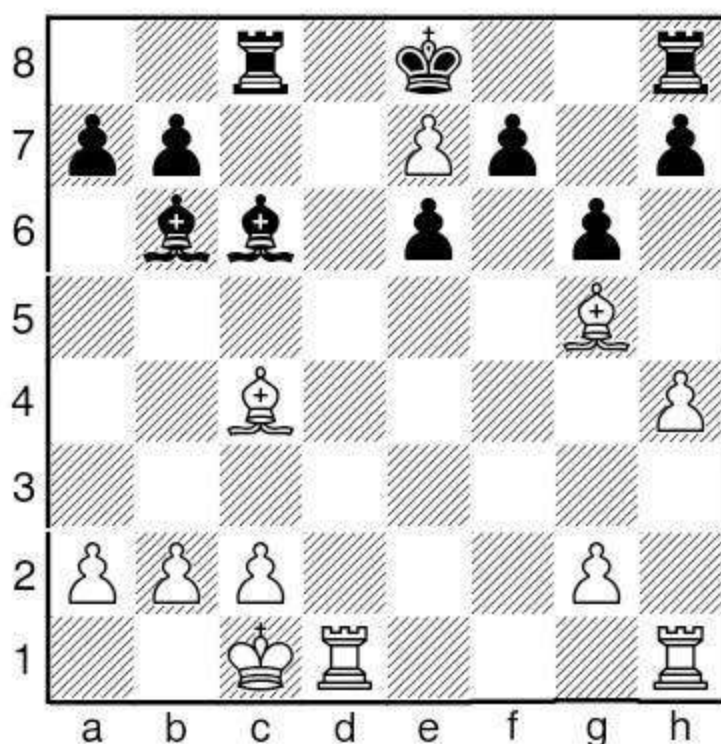
This gains a tempo by forcing Black to return his bishop

to c5.

18.♔e2 0-0 19.♙h6 ♖xg2! shows the key difference between this and the 17...♙b4 line.

### 18...♙c5

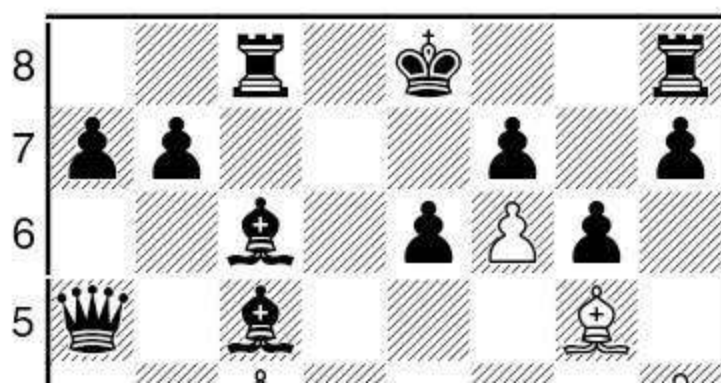
18...♔c5 has not been played due to 19.♔e7†! ♔xe7 20.fxe7 when the e7-pawn is monstrous:



20...♖g8 (20...♙xg2 21.♙b5† ♙c6 22.♙xc6† bxc6 23.♙f6 ♖g8 24.♖d3+–; 20...a6 21.♙f6 ♖g8 22.♖h3+–) 21.♙f6±

### 19.♔g3

19.♔h2!? is interesting as well, but the text move is stronger. White is a tempo up on the 17.♔g4 line, as Black is missing the useful ...h5 move, which means he constantly has to worry about h4-h5.





## 19...0-0

19...♔e4 20.h5 ♚b4 21.♙b3 (21.b3!?) 21...♙d4 22.♖d2 0-0  
23.♚h4 ♜fd8 24.♔b1 ♙c5 25.a3 ♚xb3 26.♚xe4± Romm –  
Kashlyak, corr. 2011.

## 20.♙d2!

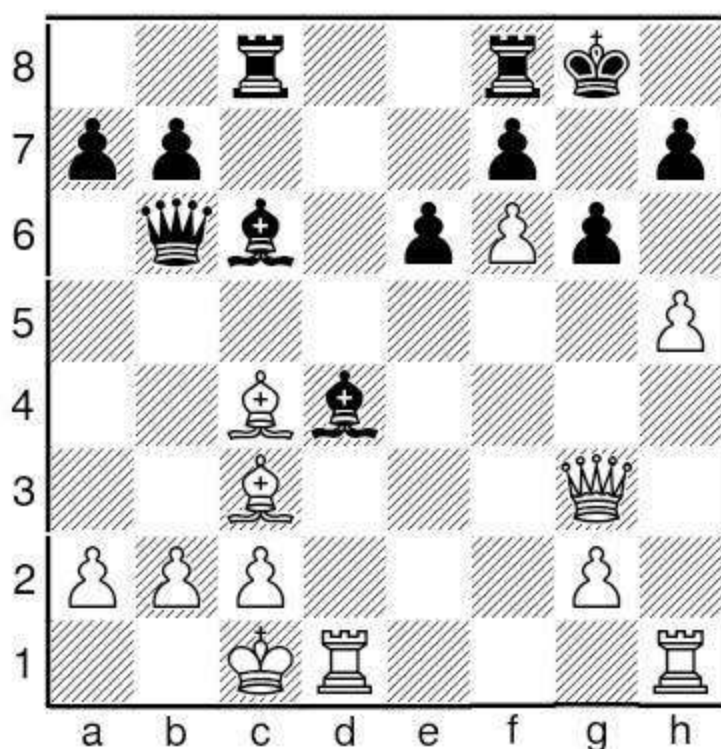
Rerouting the bishop to c3 while making room for the queen to go to g5 and h6.

## 20...♚a4

The alternative is:

20...♚b6 21.h5 ♙d4 22.♙c3!

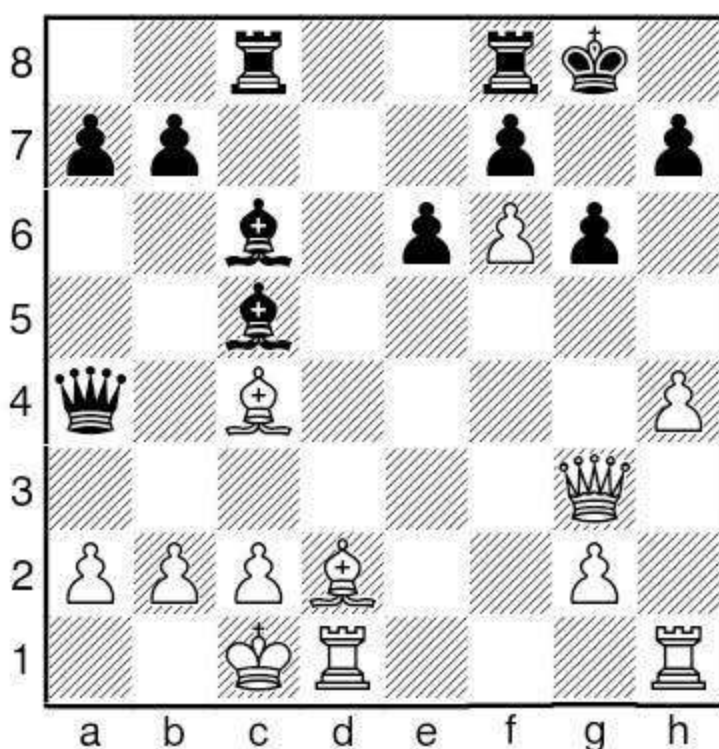
22.c3 leads to a forcing sequence: 22...♙e4! 23.hxg6  
♙xg6 24.♜xh7!? ♙xf6 25.♙d3 ♔xh7 26.♜h1† ♔g8  
27.♙xg6 fxg6 28.♚xg6† ♙g7 29.♚h7† ♔f7 30.♙h6 ♚d4  
31.♜f1† ♔e8 32.♚g6† ♔d7 33.♜d1 ♙xh6† 34.♚xh6  
♚xd1† 35.♔xd1± White managed to win the endgame  
in Volokitin – Antoniewski, Austria 2012, but it seems  
to me that Black should have good chances to hold.  
The text move seems better to me, as I'm not  
convinced that the above endgame is anything  
special for White.



22...♙f2 23.♔g4 ♚e3† 24.♙b1 ♚e4 25.♔xe4 ♙xe4 26.♙d3 ♙d5  
26...♙xd3 27.♖xd3 is a tough endgame for Black.

27.hxg6 fxg6 28.f7† ♖xf7 29.♙xg6 ♖fc7 30.♙d3±

Despite the queen exchange, Black's exposed king is a serious problem.



**21.♙b3**

21.h5 ♙d6! is good enough to hold the balance, and if White tries to force his way through with 22.♔g5?? ♔xc4 23.♔h6 he runs into the pretty refutation 23...♔xc2†! 24.♙xc2 ♙e4† 25.♙b3 ♙c2 mate!

**21...♔e4 22.♔g5!**

After 22.h5 ♔xc2 23.♔f4 g5 Black eventually prevailed in Lahno – Galliamova, Krasnoturinsk 2007. The text move is a clear improvement. A recent correspondence game pretty much sealed Black's fate in this line.

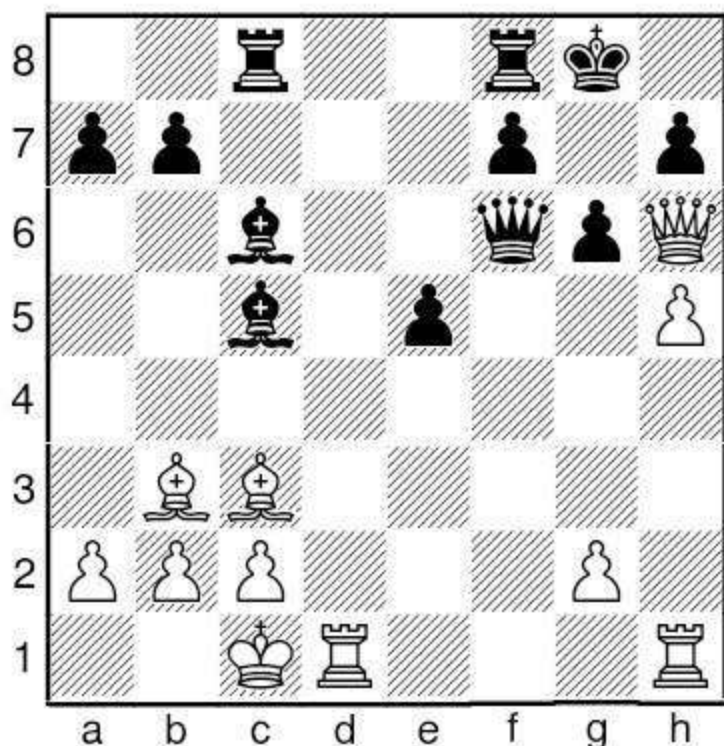
**22...♔f5 23.♔h6 ♔xf6 24.♙c3 e5 25.h5**





After 22.f5 23.g5 Black eventually prevailed in Lahno – Galliamova, Krasnoturinsk 2007. The text move is a clear improvement. A recent correspondence game pretty much sealed Black's fate in this line.

22...♔f5 23.♔h6 ♕xf6 24.♙c3 e5 25.h5



25...♔g7 26.♔g5 h6 27.♔xg6±

White went on to convert his advantage in Bogatov – Narozhny, corr. 2012.

## Conclusion

6...♔a5 and 6...g6 both have clear drawbacks, and White soon develops an initiative with a few precise moves. 6...♙d7 is more interesting though, and the delaying of ...e6 gives the position a different character from most variations, making it harder for White to rely on general understanding. After the automatic 7.♔d2 Black has several options, 7...h6!? being quite a popular choice of late. 7...♖c8 has been regarded as the main line for a long time, but the latest games indicate that Black is struggling to get close to equality.

# Chapter 13

## Rauzer



6...e6 7.♔d2 ♔b6

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6  
6.♙g5 e6 7.♙d2 ♙b6 8.♙xf6 gxf6  
9.♘b3

A) 9...♙d7

B) 9...a6

B1) 10.f4!?

B2) 10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.f4 0-0-0 12.♙e2 h5 13.♖hf1

B21) 13...♔b8

B22) 13...♙e7

B23) 13...♘a5

B1) after 12...0-0-0



13.♙f3?N

B21) after 15...♙c8



16.♘a4!N

B23) after 14...♙xa5



15.♙f3!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6

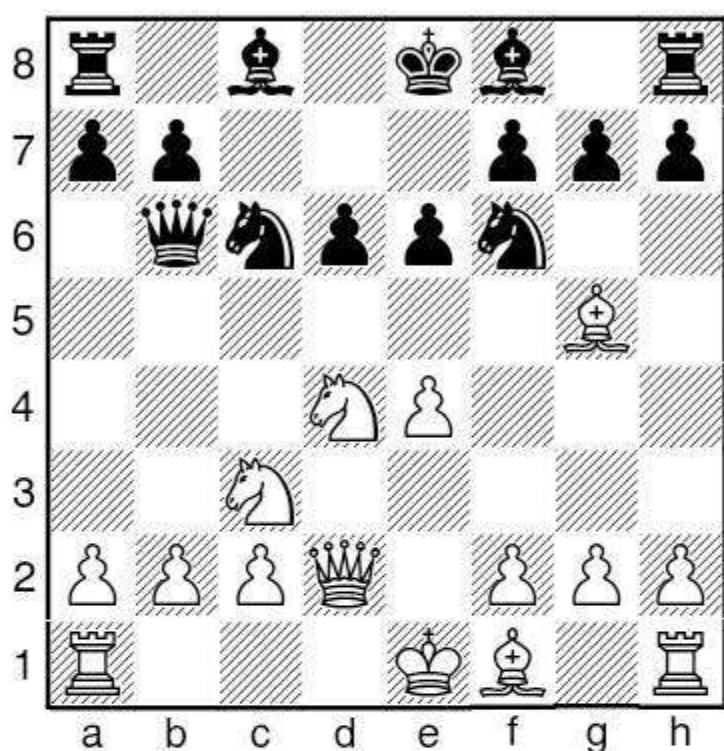
The present chapter ties in with our Najdorf repertoire from the previous volume, as 5...a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♙b6 8.♙d2 ♘c6 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♘b3 transposes to variation B1 on page 188.



## 6. ♖g5 e6

6... ♖b6 is aimed primarily at avoiding lines such as 6... e6 7. ♖d2 ♖b6 8. 0-0-0, while allowing another interesting option in 7. ♗e3!?. However, we don't have to worry about it as after 7. ♞b3 e6 8. ♗xf6 gxf6 9. ♖d2 we transpose to our main line.

## 7. ♖d2 ♖b6



## 8. ♗xf6 gxf6 9. ♞b3

We will analyse A) 9... ♗d7 followed by B) 9... a6.

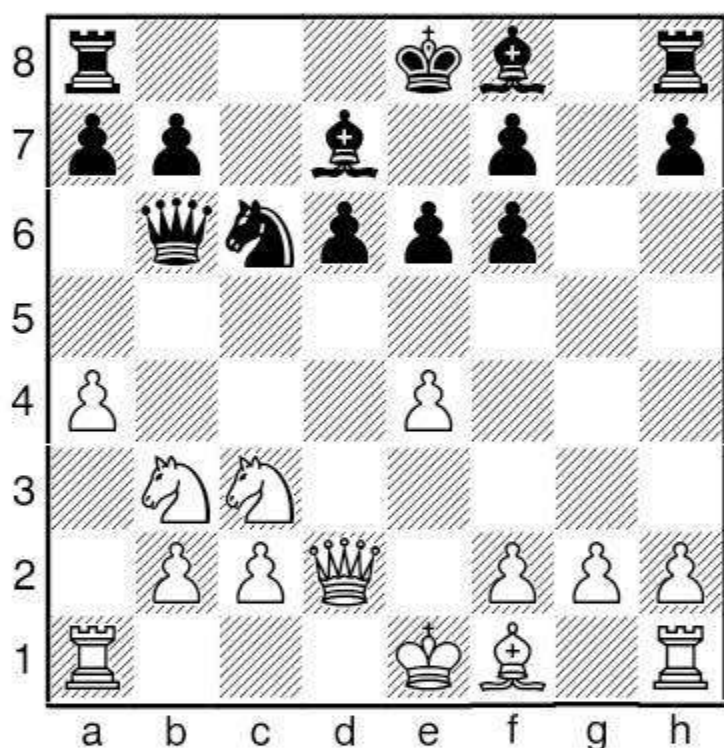
### A) 9... ♗d7

As you will see in variation B, the ...a6 move may prove to be a subtle weakness, as well as a potentially wasted move in many of the main variations. It is therefore important to know how to react in the event that Black tries to do without it.

## 10. a4!?

10. ♞b5!? ♞e5 11. a4 a6 12. a5 ♖c6 13. ♞c3 is an interesting alternative.

Even 10.♖b5!? makes some sense, intending to take on c6. In the doubled-f-pawn structure, the material balance of two knights against two bishops can work well for White, as there are lots of potentially annoying knight jumps. The main problem here is that Black can recapture on c6 with the pawn, leading to a highly unusual structure: 10...a6 11.♖xc6 bxc6 (11...♖xc6 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.f4) 12.0-0!? It is certainly possible for White to develop rapidly and try to exert pressure here, but I don't think we need to study it in much detail because the main line seems quite satisfying in itself.



## 10...♖a5

I also considered:

## 10...a6 11.a5

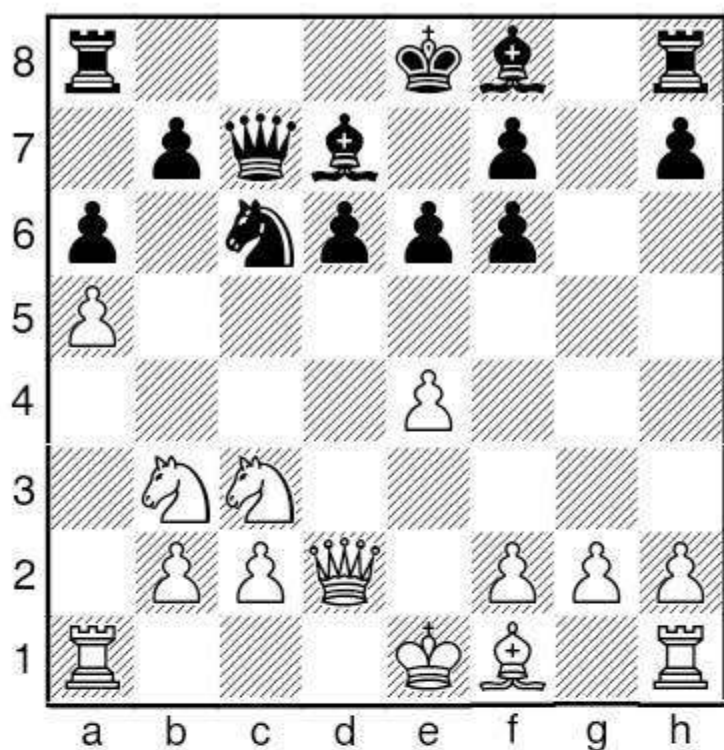
It seems rather unpleasant for Black to allow this queenside bind. White can just castle short and, at the right moment, install a knight on b6. It is worth mentioning that the engine often suggests queenside castling for Black, but it underestimates the danger of White's attack after a quick b4-b5.

## 11...♙c7

In Marcotulli – Pechova, email 2002, White went for



12. ♖a4 followed by ♖b6 and 0-0-0. Instead I think we should castle on the other wing, as mentioned above.



12. ♖d3N

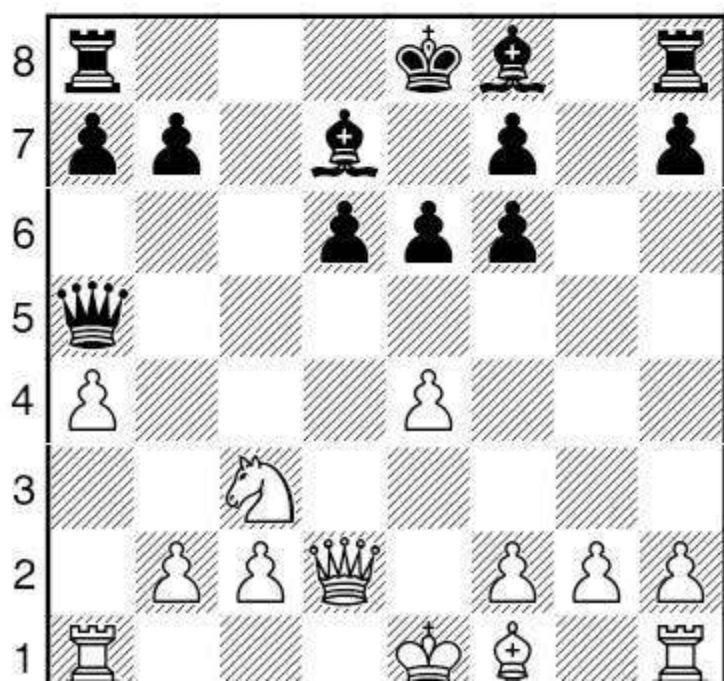
12. ♖e2N leads to similar positions with the choice mainly coming down to personal preference. 12...h5 (12...0-0-0 13. ♖h5±) 13. ♖a4 ♖d8 14. ♖b6±

12...h5

12...0-0-0 13. ♖a4 ♖b8 14. ♖b6 ♖e8 15. 0-0±

13. 0-0±

11. ♖xa5 ♔xa5



## 12.♙b5!

The key idea. In these structures Black's chances are mainly connected with the long-term potential of his bishop pair, so exchanging one of them considerably reduces his potential. White can even afford to go into an endgame, which would usually be a dream scenario for Black.

## 12...♙c6

12...♙xb5!?N may objectively be an improvement over the main line, but it fails to pose us any problems. 13.♘xb5 ♖xd2† 14.♙xd2 ♔e7 15.c4± Black's counterplay is stifled and the endgame is clearly more pleasant for White.

12...♞d8 is an overly elaborate way for Black to avoid the queen exchange. 13.0-0 a6 14.♙xd7† ♞xd7 As I mentioned, the absence of light-squared bishops gives White an improved version of this typical structure. 15.♙h1 followed by f4-f5 is one good continuation.

## 13.0-0N

Simple chess works fine here.

13.♙d4 was played in Iordachescu – Sulashvili, Paleochoira 2010. This move would be fine if it forced Black's bishop to go to e7, as happened in the game, as the plan of b4-b5 may prove promising for White, especially if Black's king is stuck in the centre. However, there is a concrete problem:

13...♙xb5!N It is easy to overlook that the bishop is actually hanging. White can recapture the piece by inserting 14.b4, but it weakens his queenside: 14...♙d8 15.axb5 (After 15.♘xb5 a6 16.♘c3 ♞c8 White would prefer the pawn back on b2) 15...♙g7 16.♞xa7 0-0 Black solves most of his problems at the cost of a pawn, which seems a good trade to me. Ideas of ...f5 are in the air, and he may become active along the c-file as well.

## 13...a6



Black may as well force matters on the queenside.

13...♗e7

This gives White a few tempting continuations.

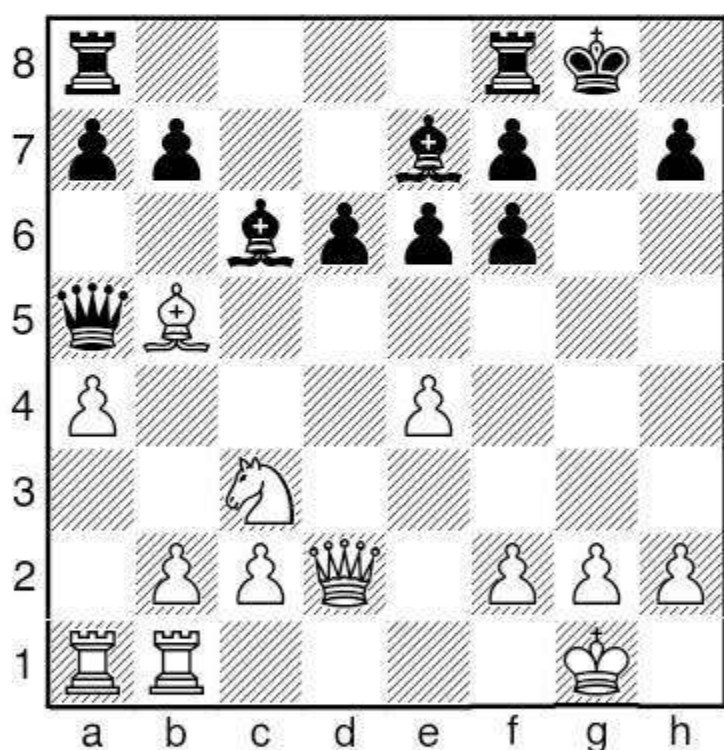
14.♖fb1!?

14.♔h6!? is another typical idea that Black has to worry about.

14...0-0

After 14...♔b4 15.♖a3! Black's queen is out of place, and White threatens to exchange on c6 followed by ♖b3-b7.

14...a6 15.♗xc6† bxc6 16.b4 ♔c7 17.b5 also leaves Black in some trouble. White is forcing his way through on the queenside, and ...0-0 will be met by a rook lift.



15.b4 ♔c7 16.♗d3!

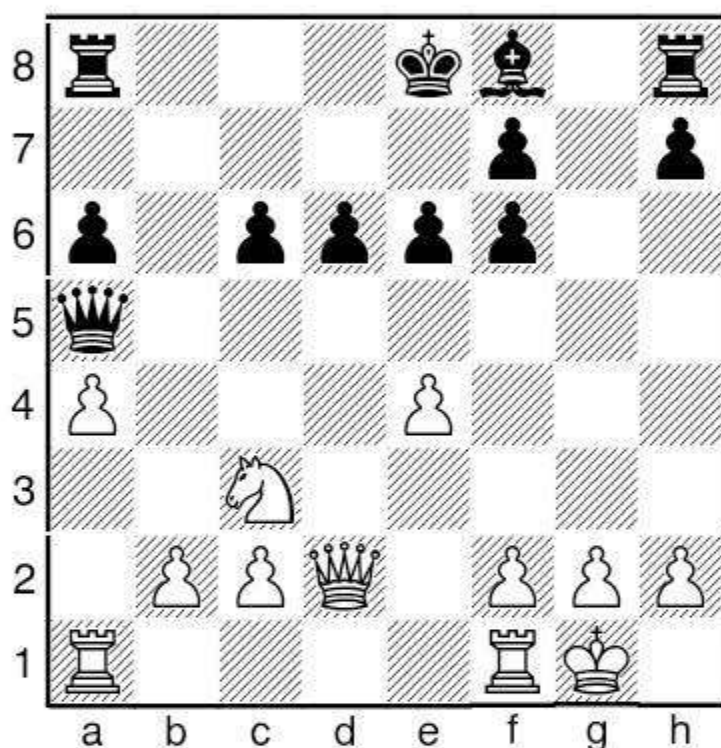
Now that Black has committed his king, it makes sense to avoid the bishop exchange and solidify the queenside. Now White can slowly lift his major pieces to the kingside and transfer his knight to d4 or h5, building up the pressure without having to worry about serious counterplay.

14.♗xc6†

14. ♖a3!? could be considered but, unless Black goes for short castling, it is not clear how useful the rook will be on the third rank, so we may as well just take on c6 immediately.

### 14...bxc6

White has a few different plans available. He could put the queen on d4 and try to arrange b4-b5, or he could just put the rooks on good squares and wait for Black to decide what to do with his king. However, my first choice would be:



### 15.f4

I like the simple approach of plonking a pawn on f4. It adds a layer of vulnerability to Black's position, as the game might be opened up at any moment. If he reacts with ...e5 then the structure doesn't bode well for his bishop at all. The main point, though, is not about the exact moves, but rather about appreciating the favourable nature of the middlegame with knight versus bishop in this pawn structure. As we discussed before, having only one bishop considerably reduces Black's flexibility, and while ...bxc6 looks like a favourable change in his structure, it's not so easy to turn it into counterplay, as a subsequent ...d5 may



lead to an unwanted opening of the position. Black's king also stays in a kind of limbo: castling on either side is likely to be dangerous, while leaving the king in the centre is also not ideal, as it interferes with the lines of communication between Black's pieces.

### 15...♖b8

I will present a few lines to highlight some of White's ideas although, as I said, it's not so much about the exact moves from here on as understanding the strategic aspects of the position.

15...d5 16.exd5 cxd5 17.f5 looks dangerous for Black.

15...♙e7 16.f5 ♔e5 17.♔h1 0-0 18.♖ae1± is ideal for White, as his knight is ready to jump around.

### 16.♔h1!?

A small finesse, avoiding 16.♖ab1 d5! 17.exd5 cxd5 18.f5 ♙b4 when Black gets some counterplay.

### 16...♙e7

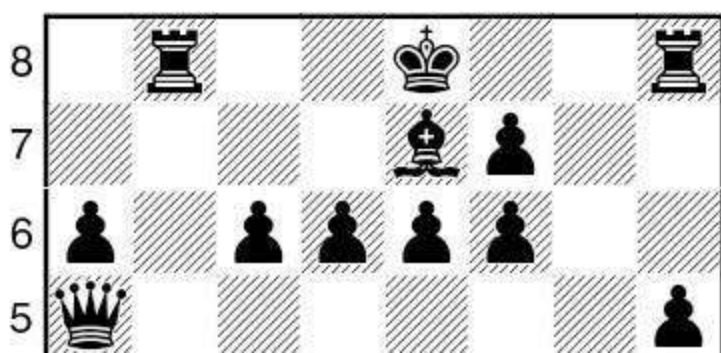
16...♖xb2 17.♖ab1 ♖xb1 18.♖xb1 looks extremely dangerous.

### 17.♖ab1

I don't want to play b2-b3 because it will allow ...d5 followed by ...♙b4 again.

### 17...h5

Both 17...0-0 18.♖f3± and 17...d5 18.exd5 cxd5 19.f5± leave Black's king in danger.



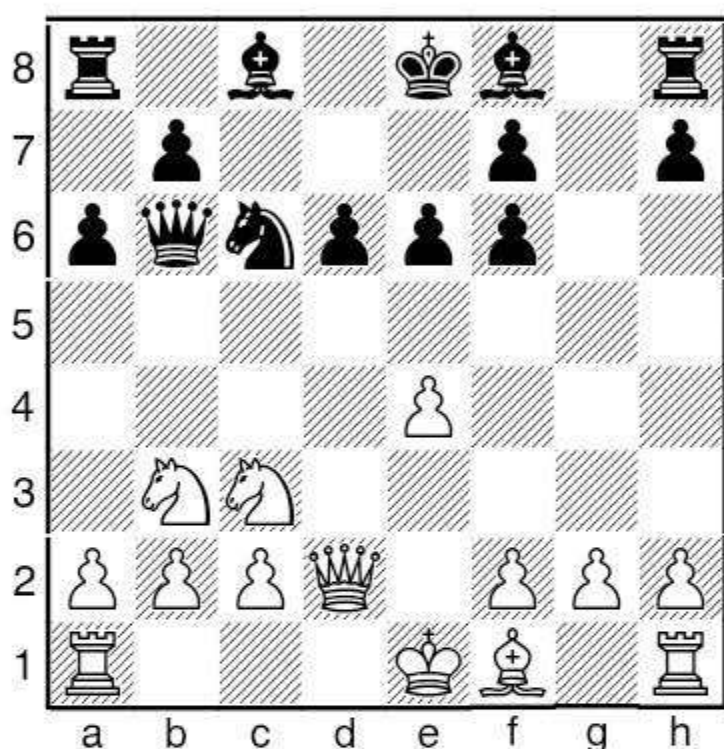
### 18.f5 h4 19.b3 h3 20.g3

Despite the menacing pawn on h3, it will not be easy for Black to generate further counterplay. White, on the other hand, has many ways to improve his position.

### 20...♔e5 21.♔d3 a5 22.♖be1

Intending ♘d1.

### B) 9...a6



The previous variation showed why the majority of players have considered it worthwhile to invest a tempo on ...a6 in this line. Still, it takes some effort to understand the subtler details of the move order, along with some concrete lines where a tempo makes a big difference. We will get to this in due course, but for now I will just mention that one of the key battles is centred around the ...♘a5 idea. Once Black has made a few basic developing moves, he will often look to trade knights in this way, in order to ease his slightly cramped position. A knight exchange will also reduce White's possibilities on the queenside. As we will see, if White gets time to bring his rook to the third rank with f2-f4, ♔e2 and ♖f1-f3, he will be ready to meet ...♘a5 with the

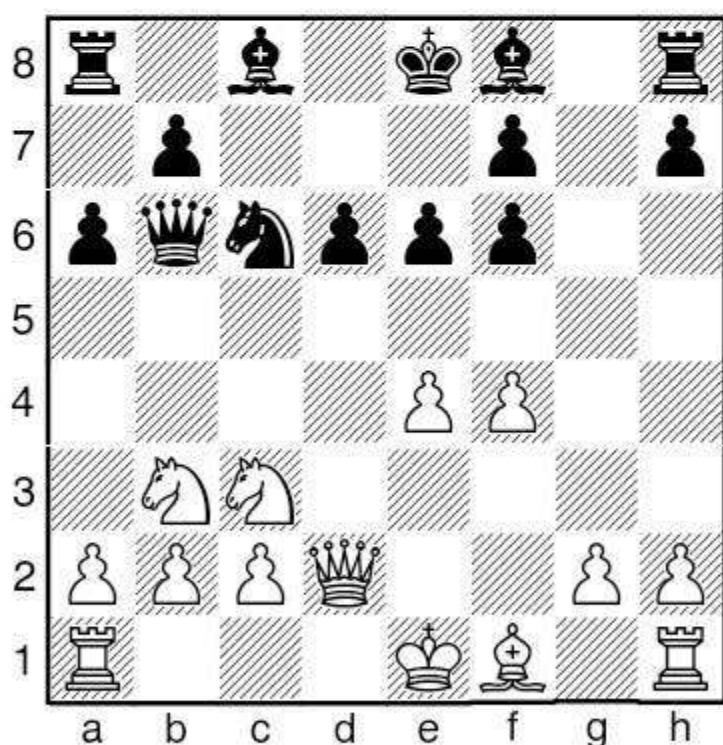


tactical solution ♘d5!. Keeping these points in mind will make it easier for you to understand the analysis that follows.

In the majority of games Black has not really prioritized the ...♘a5 manoeuvre, so we will spend some time looking at how White can improve his position in such a scenario. However, I regard the lines involving ...♘a5 as the most critical, so I have prepared a few different ways for White to fight against this idea. We will discuss **B1) 10.f4!?** followed by the more popular **B2) 10.0-0-0**. The two moves usually transpose but it is worth knowing a little about each of them.

Before examining the two main moves, please note that 10.a4 ♘a5! immediately solves Black's opening problems.

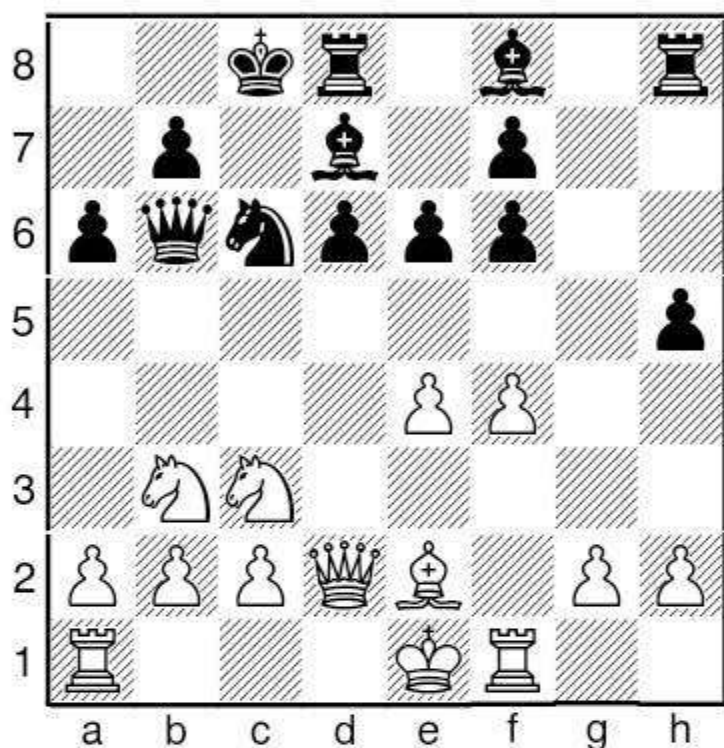
### B1) 10.f4!?



This is a perfectly playable move order which may also occur via the Najdorf after 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♔b6 8.♔d2 ♘c6 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.♘b3. White can easily transpose to variation B2 if he wishes, but it is also worth checking what happens if White tries to delay castling.

**10...♔d7 11.♔e2 h5 12.♖f1 0-0-0**

One of the reasons why I am not analysing this line in detail is that the untested 12...♘a5!?N gives us nothing better than 13.♘xa5 ♔xa5 14.0-0-0 0-0-0, transposing to variation B23 below. However, since most Black players have castled automatically, it is worth looking to see if White can try to reduce Black's options from the present position.



**13.♖f3!?N**

13.0-0-0 leads to variation B2 below, but it is worth considering the immediate rook lift. If Black plays slowly then we will follow up by castling, transposing to one of the later variations B21 or B22, having bypassed the ...♘a5 plan. Obviously Black gets some additional options such as checking on g1, but it is hard to make that idea work for him.

**13...♖g8**

13...♘a5? runs into 14.♘d5! when the tactics favour White.

13...♔b8 14.0-0-0 transposes to variation B21.



Of course we should also consider:

13...♔g1† 14.♕f1 ♔a7

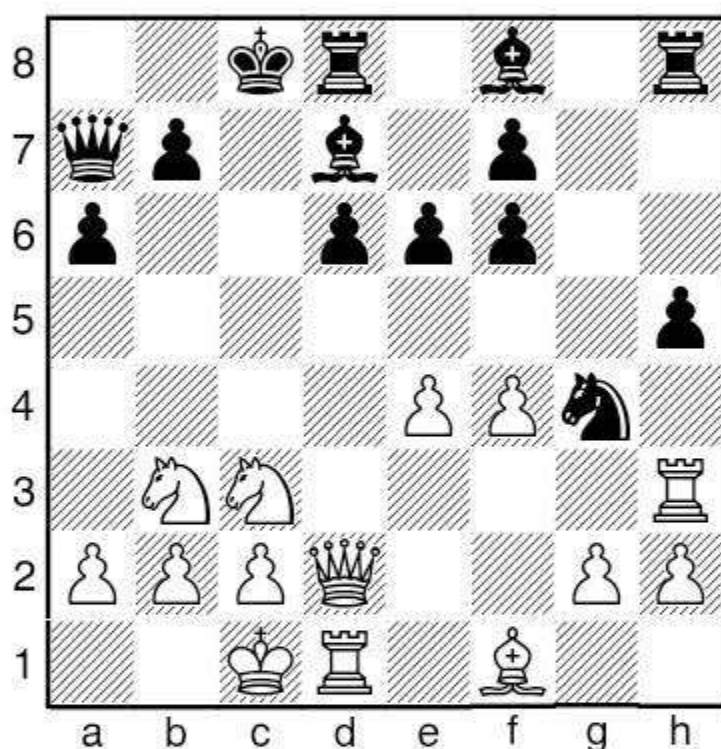
A rather strange computer idea.

After 14...♔xh2 15.0-0-0, Black's queen is in trouble.

14...♔b8 15.0-0-0 ♘e5 looks pretty but it achieves nothing after 16.♖h3!± when Black's pieces will swiftly be driven back.

15.0-0-0 ♘e5 16.♖h3 ♘g4

Black is aiming for concrete tricks but his play looks rather shaky; in particular, his queenside is exposed.

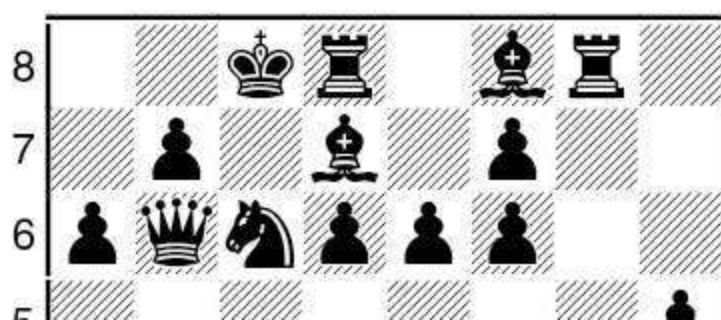


17.♖e1

17.♘a5!? might be an interesting exchange sacrifice, but it is not needed.

17...♔f2 18.♕e2 ♔xg2 19.♕xg4 ♔xg4 20.♖g3 ♔h4 21.♘e2!?

White is ready to create threats on the queenside, while Black's queen is stuck on the far side of the board.



14.♙f1 ♘e7!?

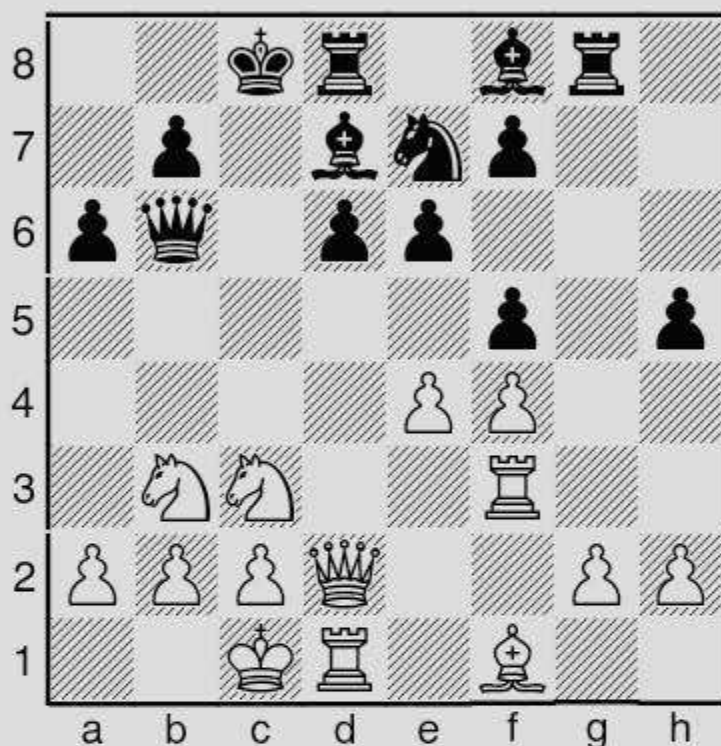
14...f5? 15.exf5 d5 16.0-0-0±

14...♔b8 15.0-0-0 is again similar to variation B21.

## 15.0-0-0

15.♖d3!? ♙c6 (15...f5 16.♖xd6 ♘c6 17.♖d3) 16.♘d4 is another idea that could be considered.

## 15...f5



16.♖d3 ♙c6 17.exf5 ♘xf5 18.g3

White intends ♙h3 next. The position is interesting and I will leave it for the reader to explore it in greater detail if he wishes.

## B2) 10.0-0-0





This is the usual move order, and you should be familiar with the lines that follow even if you intend to give 10.f4!? a try.

## 10...♔d7

Black has tried some other moves, but I will concentrate on the set-up I consider the most logical for him.

## 11.f4 0-0-0

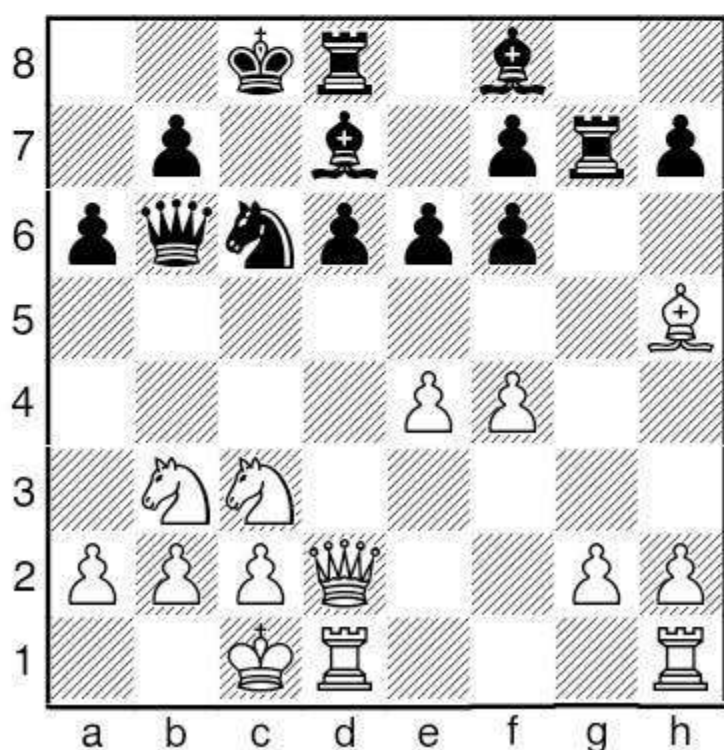
11...♖g8 12.g3 0-0-0 13.♙e2 ♙e7 14.♙h5 ♖g7 15.♔b1 is similar to the note on 12...♖g8 below.

## 12.♙e2

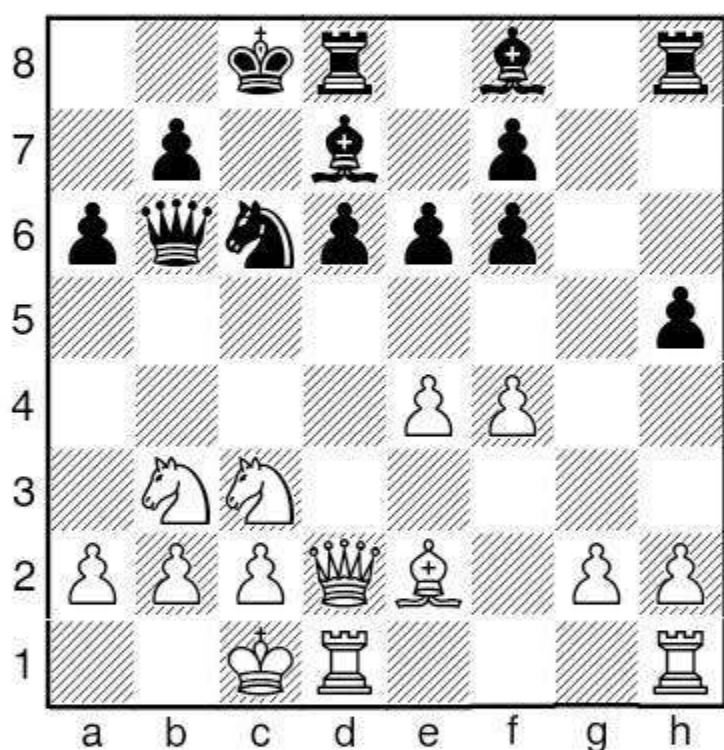
I think it's a bit too early for 12.♘a4 ♔c7, since 13.♔f2 ♔b8 14.♘b6 ♙e8 does not achieve much for White.

## 12...h5

12...♖g8 13.♙h5 ♖g7 leaves Black with a somewhat passive position, even though his practical results have been okay. Black is banking on the possibility of the bishop proving to be misplaced on h5, especially if White has to resort to g2-g4 later. Still, we have more than one promising plan:



14.g3!?N My simple but brand new idea is simply to exchange the queens with a timely ♔d4 whenever Black plays ...♘a5. (14.♞hf1!?N 14...♘a5 15.♘xa5 ♔xa5 16.f5 is another continuation that seems preferable for White to me. White maintains the bishop on h5, although he will have to decide at some point whether or not to commit to g2-g4.) 14...♔b8 15.♔b1 ♘a5 Black has to play this at some point to generate any counterplay. 16.♔d4!? ♔xd4 17.♘xd4± Endgames are usually okay for Black in this structure, but here his pieces stand awkwardly, and White will continue to exert pressure on the kingside pawn mass with a timely f4-f5.



### 13.♞hf1

#### 13.♘a4!?

This is another way to combat the ...♘a5 plan. It requires some accuracy from Black to exploit White's move order, so it's an interesting option to analyse briefly:

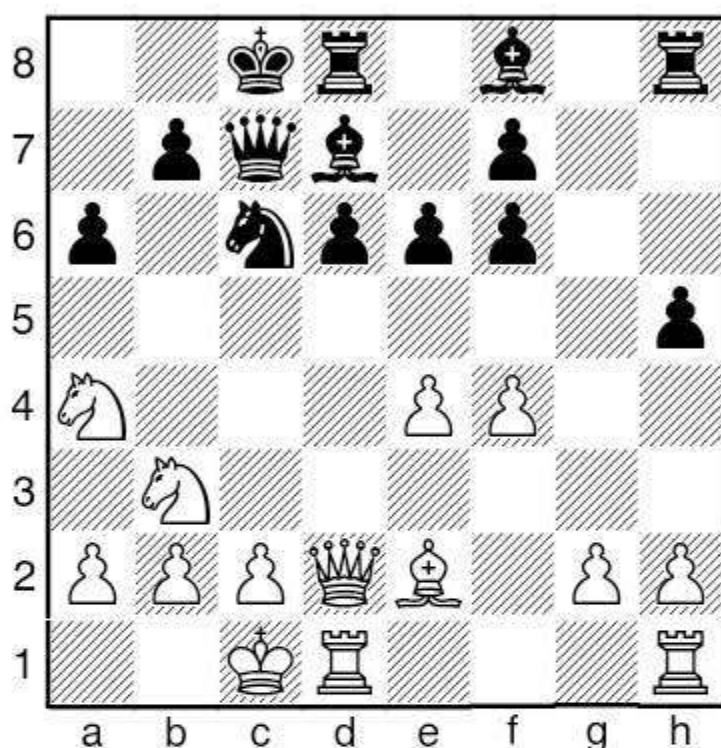
#### 13...♔c7

a) 13...♔f2? was played in Pomeroy – Price, corr. 2012, but 14.♞hf1!N 14...♔xg2 15.♔e3 would have put Black in trouble.



b) 13...♔a7 14.♖hf1 has occurred in a few engine games. One possibility is 14...♔b8N 15.♔b1 (15.♖f3? ♘e5! would be unpleasant) 15...♙e7 16.♘c3 ♔b6 17.♖f3± when we transpose to the note on 14...♔b8 in variation B22.

c) 13...♔b4N 14.♔xb4 ♘xb4 15.♘b6† ♔c7 16.♘xd7 ♖xd7 17.c3 ♘c6 18.g3± White has an easy endgame, although it's hard to say how much better he is.



14.♖hf1N

14.♔e3 ♔b8 was okay for Black in another engine game, since 15.♘b6N 15...♙e8! – with the idea of ...♘e7 and ...♙c6 – doesn't help White much.

14...♔b8

14...♘e7 15.♘c3 ♘c6 16.♖f3!±

14...b5 15.♘c3 leaves Black's king exposed.

15.♔b1

15.♖f3 d5! 16.exd5 ♘b4! 17.d6 ♔xc2† 18.♔xc2 ♘xc2 19.♘ac5 ♘b4 20.♘a5 b6 21.♘xd7† ♖xd7 22.♘c4 ♘d5 is an important line resulting in equality.





15...f5!

15...♙e7 16.♖f3 ♖c8 transposes to the note on 14...♔b8 in variation B22.

15...♘a5 16.♙xa5 ♙xa5 17.♘xa5 ♙xa4 18.♖d4 ♙d7  
19.♖f3±

16.exf5 ♘e7 17.♘c3

17.♙xd6 ♘xf5 18.♙xc7† ♔xc7 is fine for Black.

17...♘xf5 18.♙d3∞

This could certainly be analysed in more detail, but Black seems to be doing okay.

We will analyse the most common continuations of **B21)** 13...♔b8 and **B22)** 13...♙e7, before looking at the more critical **B23)** 13...♘a5.

Other moves have been tried, but the basic rule for White is to play ♖f3 next to prevent ...♘a5, before continuing to improve his position. If you study variations B21 and B22, you will have all the ideas you need to meet alternatives such as 13...h4, as the general character of the position remains the same.

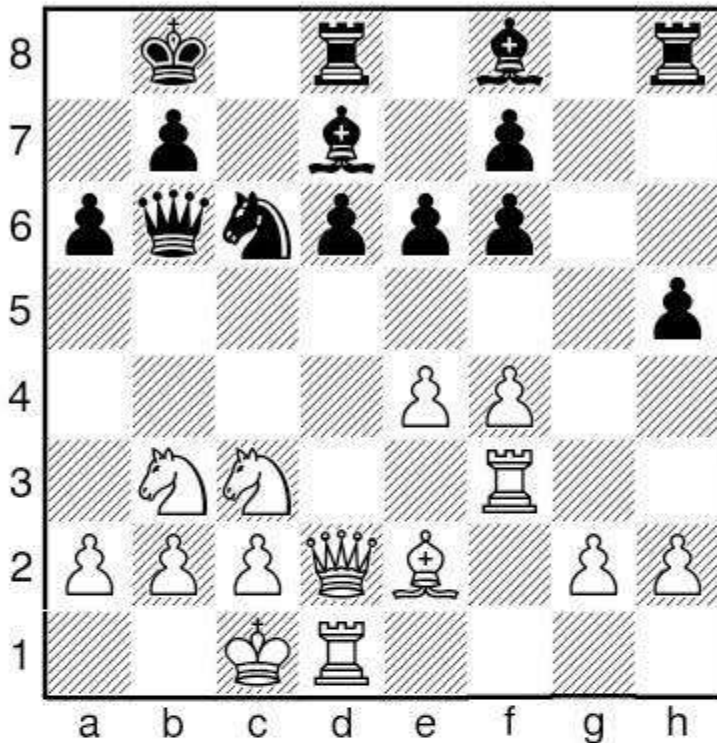
Before we get started, I will make a few general comments about the first two variations in which White gets time to play ♖f3 to prevent ...♘a5. Black will generally either shuffle around on the kingside with moves like ...♖g8, which doesn't bother us much, or improve his position on the queenside in such a way as to prepare ...♘a5. Once Black begins to threaten ...♘a5, we can utilize the important resource of ♘a4! to prevent it, before continuing to improve our position with moves like ♔b1 and a2-a3. Eventually, White would love to transfer his major pieces to the queenside and create an attack, but he doesn't have to be in a hurry to do that. The most critical thing is to prevent tactical ideas such as the ...f5/...d5 pawn breaks, which might lead to quick counterplay.



## B21) 13...♔b8

Black improves his king while delaying the development of the f8-bishop.

### 14.♖f3!



### 14...h4

In case the message hasn't sunk in yet, let me remind you that White's last move prepares to meet 14...♘a5? with 15.♘d5!.

14...♘e5 might seem witty but it's actually rather pointless: 15.♖h3 h4 16.♔b1 ♘g6 The knight is completely misplaced on g6, and the queenside will be even more vulnerable. 17.♖d3± White can either remove his knights from the third rank and put the rook on b3 later, or prepare a more fancy manoeuvre like ♖d4-b4. Black's knight is poor and he has no counterplay in sight.

### 14...♞c8!?

This move is a logical way to prepare ...♘a5, which forces us to be ready for some concrete lines.

### 15.♔b1

15.♘a4 does not really work here due to 15...♔b4!  
 16.♔xb4 ♘xb4 when 17.♘c3 is forced.

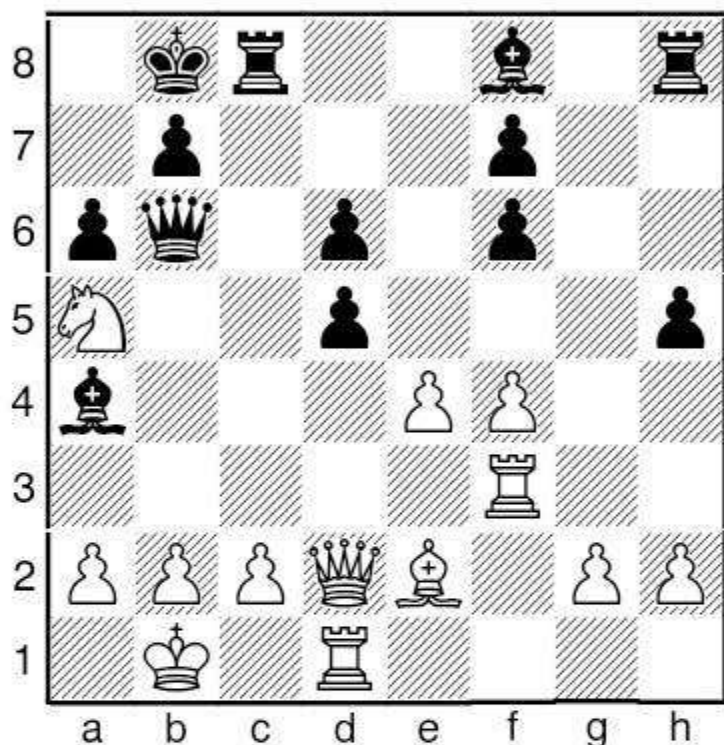
15...♘a5!?

15...h4 transposes to the main line below.

15...♙e7 transposes to the note on 14...♔b8 in variation B22.

16.♘d5! exd5 17.♘xa5 ♙a4

In Videnova – A. L’Ami, Meci 2007, White should have played:



18.♖c1!N 18...dxe4 19.♖a3 e3 20.♔d5 ♙b5 21.c4

21.♙f3!?!↑ keeps the initiative in a more complex position, but the endgame is hard to resist.

21...♙c6 22.♘xc6† ♔xc6 23.♙f3 ♔xd5 24.♙xd5±

Black’s bishop is dead for now, and the endgame is completely one-sided.





## 15.♔b1 ♚c8 16.♞a4!N

The key idea. We prevent the ...♞a5 plan and, just as importantly, prepare future threats with ♚f2 and ♞b6.

16.♙f1 ♞a5 17.♞d5 exd5 18.♞xa5 ♙a4! was messy in Melia – Andriasian, Yerevan 2014. Perhaps 19.♚c1N could still offer White better chances, but there is no reason for White to enter such complications.

## 16...♚c7

Black maintains the possibilities of ...♞a5 and ...♞d4, hoping to exploit the placement of the knight on a4.

16...♚b4 17.♚xb4 ♞xb4 18.♞b6 ♚d8 19.♞xd7† ♚xd7 20.c3 ♞c6 21.f5±

16...♚d8 17.♚e3±

16...♚a7 17.♚d3± White can continue improving with many useful moves, such as a2-a3 and ♙f3 (or ♙g4). Later he might retreat the knight to c3 and continue manoeuvring, or he could perhaps move the b3-knight to create ♚b3 ideas. In the meantime, Black doesn't have many ways to generate counterplay. The ...b5 advance severely weakens the queenside, while ...♞e7 does not help much, as White will be happy to return the knight to c3 at some point anyway.

## 17.♙f1 ♞a5

After 17...b5 18.♞c3± Black's queenside is permanently weakened.

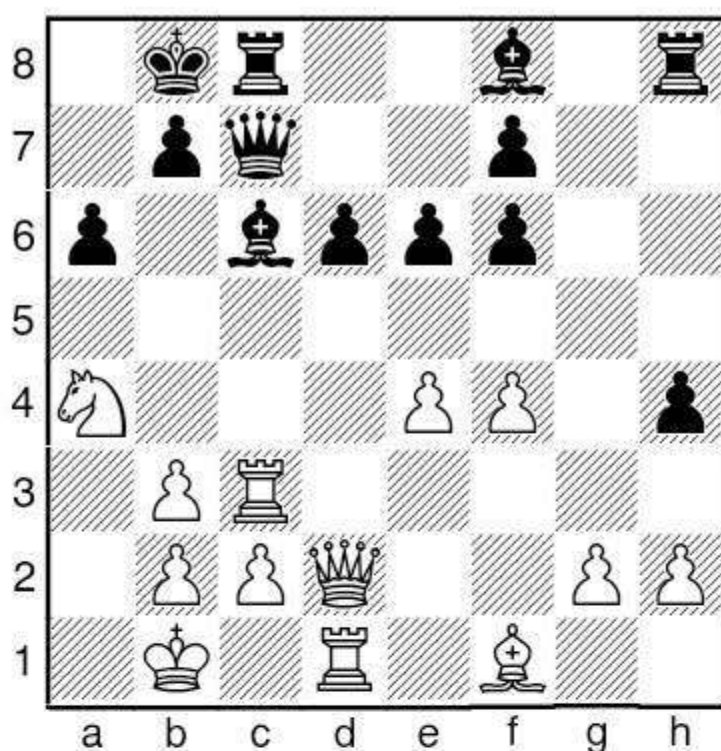
17...♙e7 18.♚f2! prepares ♞b6.

17...♞a7 18.♚c3 ♚d8 can be met by 19.♞bc5! ♙c6, when both 20.♚f2!? and 20.♚b3!? are promising for White.

## 18.♚c3!?

18.♞xa5 ♙xa4 19.♚c3 ♚d8 20.b3 also looks good.

18...♘xb3 19.axb3 ♖c6

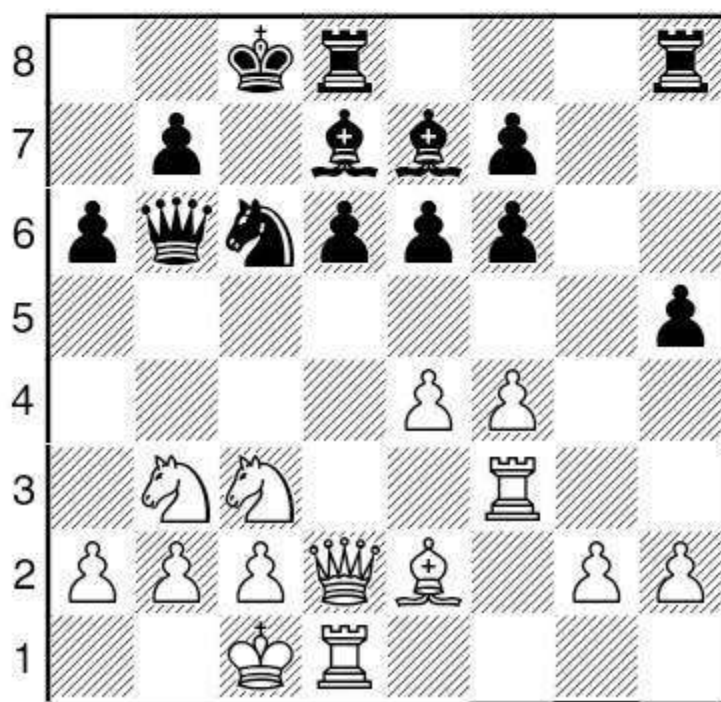


20.♙d4!±

Intending ♘b6 and b4-b5.

The alternative is 20.♙f2 ♙d8 21.♘b6 ♖c7, when White has to play the slightly awkward 22.♖e3. The strong knight and the attacking possibility of b4-b5 might still offer him the better chances, but it seems preferable to maintain full harmony with 20.♙d4.

B22) 13...♙e7 14.♖f3





## 14...♖dg8

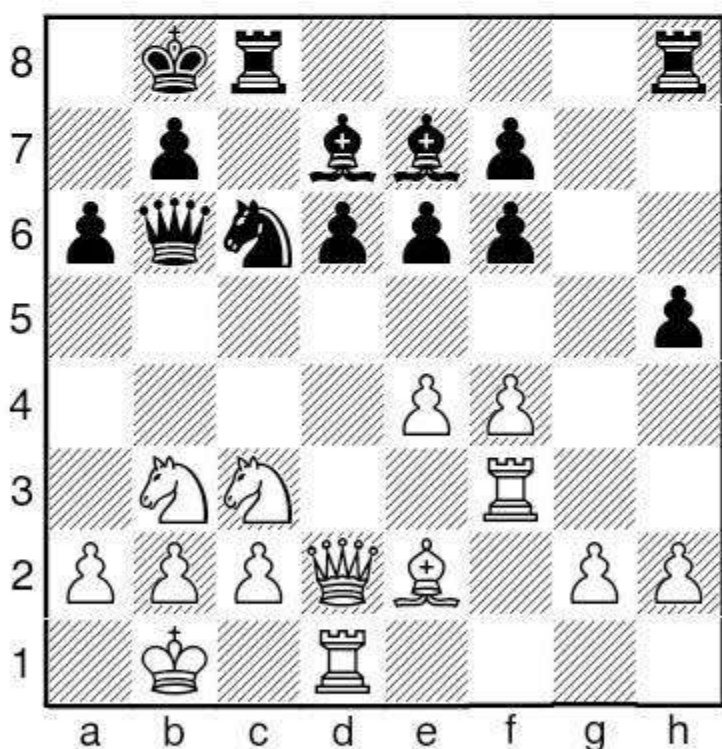
Sending the bishop back to f1 seems to be the general recipe against the primitive White plan of hunting the h5-pawn with ♖h3. It's possible for Black to go for ...♔b8 and ...♖c8 right away, but the bishop might be better on e2 in some lines. White's general ideas remain the same either way.

Once again 14...♘a5? 15.♘d5! is a disaster for Black.

## 14...♔b8 15.♔b1

15.♖h3!? deserves attention, but I don't want to worry about lines like 15...♘a5!?N (15...h4 16.♙e1 ♖dg8 17.♙f3! ♘a5 [17...f5 18.exf5±] 18.♘xa5 ♙xa5 19.♖xh4± Paikidze – Kosintseva, Moscow 2010) 16.♙xh5 d5 when Black suddenly gets some counterplay.

## 15...♖c8



## 16.♘a4!?N

Once again we go for this typical move.

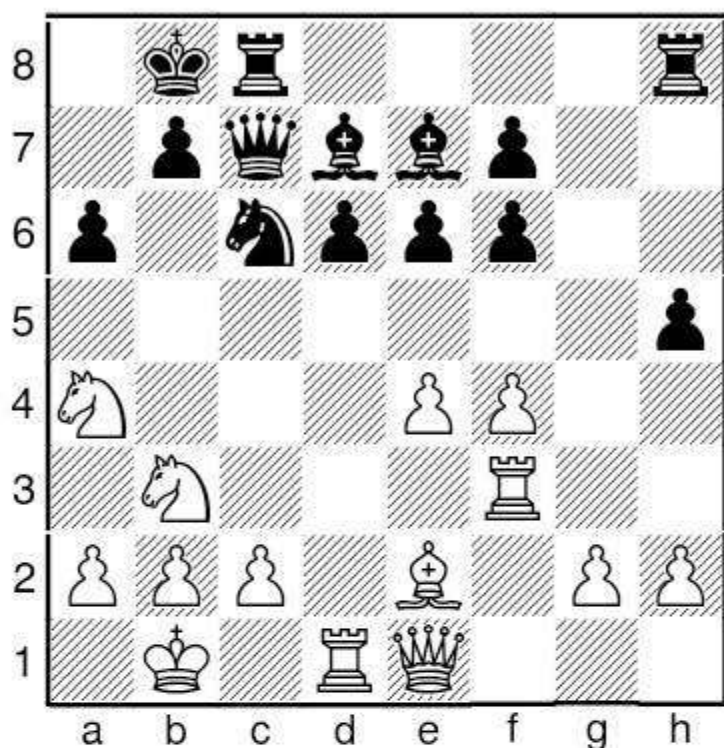
16.♖h3?! ♘a5! 17.♙xh5 (17.♘d5 exd5 18.♘xa5 ♙xh3) 17...♘c4 18.♙e1 (18.♙d3 d5) 18...d5! ♞ Kersten – Gutman, Altenkirchen 1999.

16...♔c7

16...♔a7 17.a3 is similar to our main line after 14...♖dg8. The bishop is on e2 instead of f1, but I don't see any reason for us to complain about that.

17.♔e1

White's ideas include ♔f2 (or ♔g1) and ♖h3.



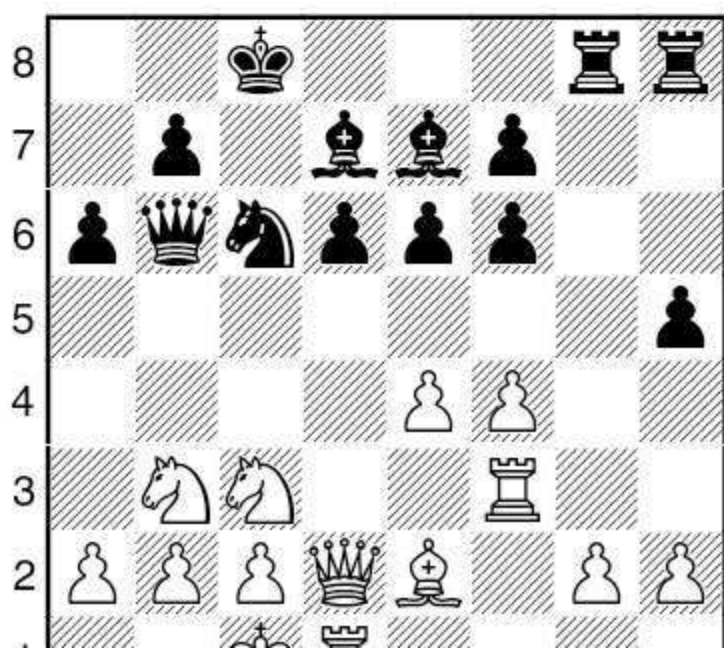
17...♘a7

17...d5? 18.♘ac5±

17...b5 18.♘c3±

17...f5 18.exf5 ♕f6 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.♔d2±

18.♘c3 ♘c6 19.♖h3±

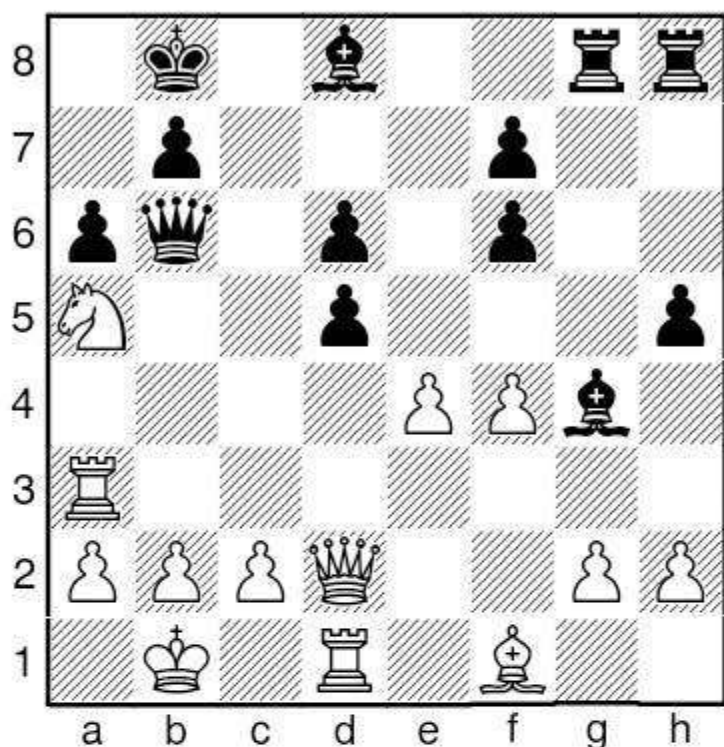




15.♙f1 ♖b8 16.♙b1 ♜c8

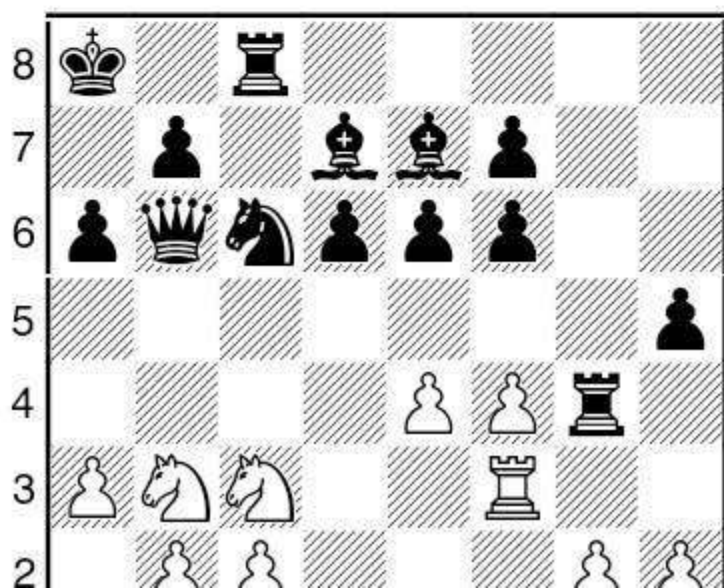
Here is a selection of the alternatives to have been tried.

16...♘a5? is still a bad idea: 17.♘d5! exd5 18.♘xa5 ♙d8  
 19.♜a3 (19.♙xd5 ♙xa5) 19...♙g4N (This is the only chance, as  
 19...dxe4 20.♘xb7! was winning for White in Lugovskoy –  
 Oganyan, Krasnodar 2012)



20.♘xb7! ♙xb7 21.♙xa6 ♙c6 22.♙xd5 ♙xd5 23.♜xd5 Despite  
 the queen exchange, White's initiative is close to winning.

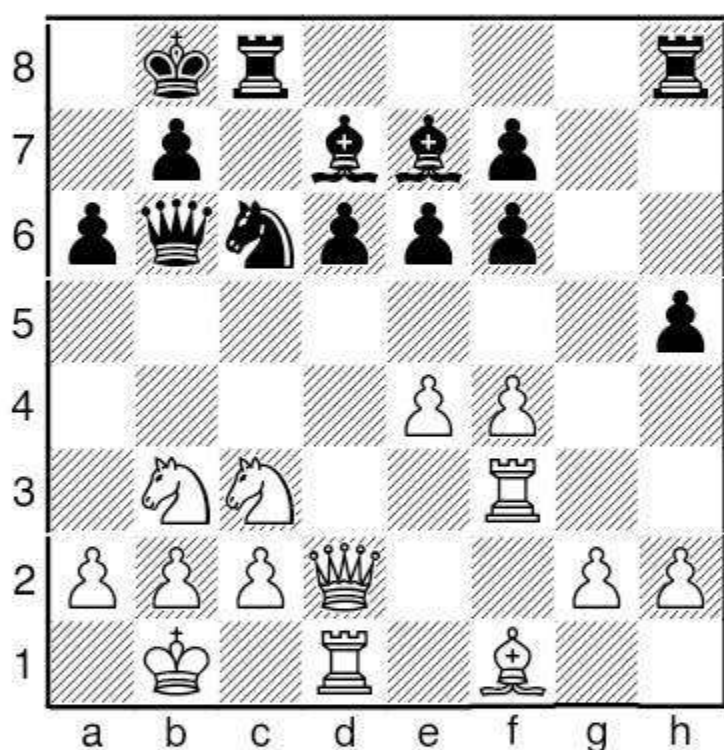
16...♜g4 has been played a few times, but I don't see what  
 Black is trying to do. 17.♙e1 A logical continuation is:  
 17...♜c8N 18.a3 ♙a8 (18...♘a5 19.♘d5!)





19.♘e2 (19.♘a4 ♔a7 20.♚f2 ♚xf2 21.♖xf2 ♔a7 22.♙e2 ♖g7 seems okay for Black) 19...♖cg8 20.h3 ♖4g7 21.f5!?±

16...h4 17.♚e1 ♖h5 is another questionable way of activating the rook. 18.♖h3 (18.♘d5? exd5 19.exd5 ♘e5 20.fxe5 ♖xe5 would justify Black's rook manoeuvre) 18...♖gh8 (18...f5 19.♘d5! exd5 20.exd5 intends 20...♘e5 21.♘d4!± and we finally see the rook lift ♖b3 which I have been talking about for so long!) 19.♙e2 ♖5h6 20.♙g4 Black remains passive, while ...♘a5 is still not possible. 20...♙c8 21.a3 ♖g6 22.♙f3 ♖gh6 23.♘d2±



## 17.♘a4!

Once again our familiar knight move works well.

17.♚e1 ♖c7!? 18.♖h3 (18.♘a4 ♚b4; 18.a3 ♘a5!) Klovans – Vasiukov, Condino 2009. 18...♘a5!N∞

17.a3 ♘a5! (Polgar missed her chance to play this freeing move, and after 17...♖c7?! 18.♘a2! Black was condemned a position without much counterplay; White went on to win an instructive game in Nepomniachtchi – Polgar, Ningbo 2011.) 18.♘xa5 (18.♘d5 exd5 19.♘xa5 ♙d8N 20.♘xb7 ♚xb7)



18...♔xa5 was unclear in Cabrera – A. Rodriguez, Cuzco 1999.

17...♔a7

17...♔c7N 18.♔f2±

We have reached a typical position for this variation. The main thing to realize for White is that he doesn't have to do much in the short term. Black is stuck without much counterplay, and White should just continue to improve his position and let Black slowly suffocate.

18.a3

18.♔e1!?N is another appropriate way to continue.

It is worth mentioning that changing the pawn formation with 18.c4?! does not help White. His main idea should be to transfer his major pieces to the queenside after appropriate preparation; for this plan to be truly effective it is essential to keep the bishop active. After 18...♘d4!N 19.♘xd4 ♕xa4 20.b3 ♕d7 the position is equal.

18...♞c7N

Doubling on the c-file seems like a purposeful plan which should be investigated.

18...♔a8

This was played in the one game on my database. A good reply is:

19.♘c3!?N

Now when the queen returns to b6, ...♘a5 won't be a possibility anymore because of the familiar ♘d5 trick, as the black queen may be captured with check.

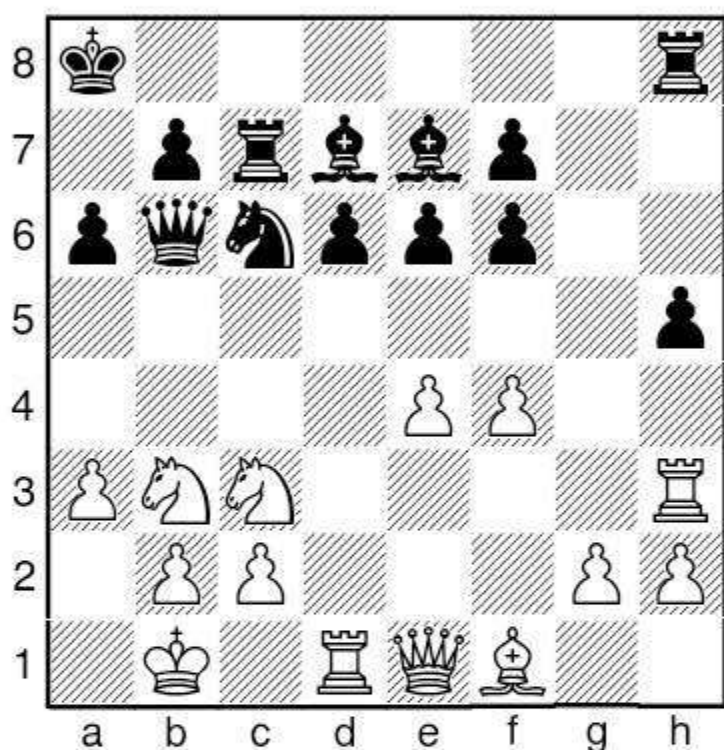
19.♔e1N is possible, but White must reckon on 19...e5!? intending 20.f5 ♘d4!.

19.♞h3 was played successfully in Sjugirov – Nepomniachtchi, Dagomys 2009, but I don't think

White ought to go after the h5-pawn yet, especially with ♔e2, as this will loosen the bind on the queenside. Often in such positions Black can sacrifice the h-pawn and get strong counterplay on the queenside, so it makes sense to postpone any pawn-grabbing until we are certain that such possibilities do not exist.

19...♚b6 20.♚e1 ♜c7 21.♞h3

21.♘a2!? is also decent. Either way, I can't see many useful moves for Black.



21...♔b8

21...♘a5? 22.♘xa5 ♚xa5 23.♘d5 wins material.

22.♘a4 ♚a7 23.♙e2±

This is a better time to go after the h-pawn, as Black's active possibilities are suitably limited.

19.♚e1!?

Just waiting for Black to show some play.

19...e5!?

19...b5 20.♘c3± is good for White as usual.

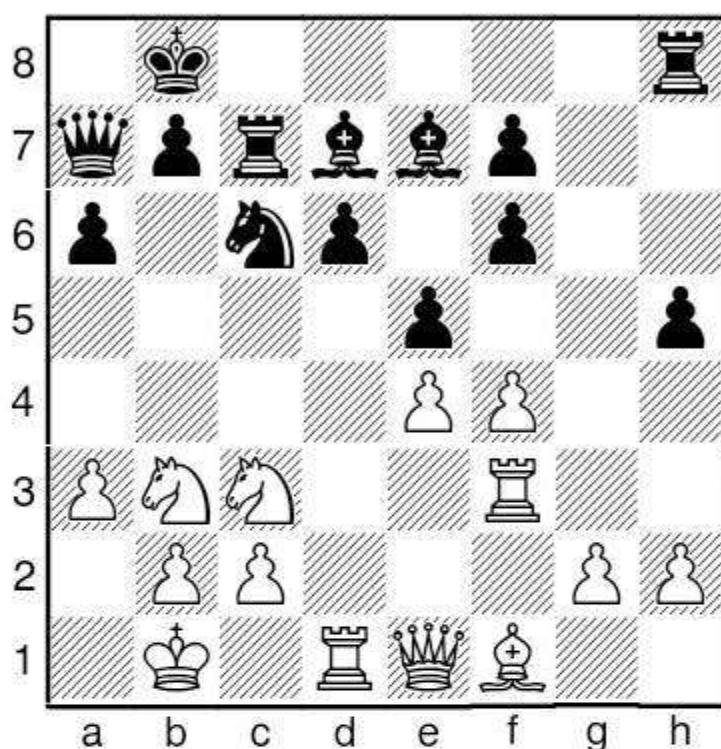
After 19...♞hc8 20.♙e2 Black's counterplay remains sketchy: 20...b5 (20...♞g8 21.♞g3±) 21.♘c3 b4 22.axb4 ♘xb4 23.♚f2!±



The open queenside structure clearly favours White in the endgame, and 23...♔b7?! 24.♘a5± only makes things worse for Black.

**20.♘c3!**

20.h3? ♘d4!≡ is no good for us, but the text move works well.



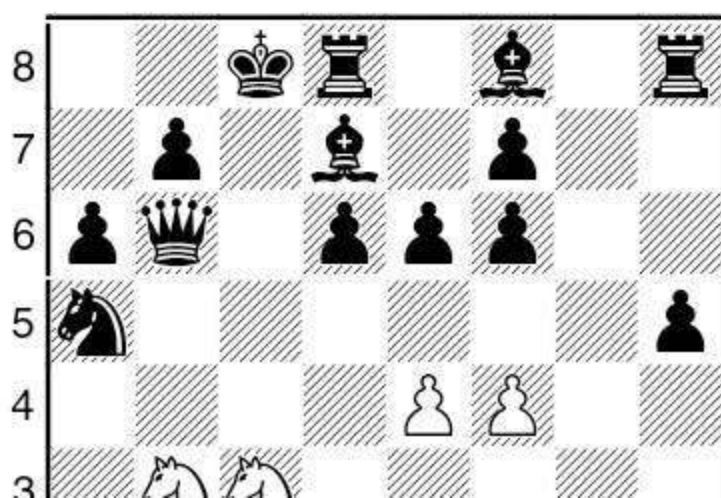
**20...♙g4 21.♘d5 ♜d7**

**21...♙xf3 22.gxf3 ♜cc8 23.♙h3≡**

**22.♙e2 ♙xf3 23.♙xf3≡**

White has excellent compensation for the exchange.

**B23) 13...♘a5**



I consider this the critical continuation. If Black is allowed to exchange the knights without repercussion, then he will be doing pretty well: one of the major problems in his position will be solved, and he has great potential for counterplay in the centre and on the queenside thanks to his two bishops. Therefore we need to have some specific ideas.

**14. ♖xa5! ♔xa5 15. ♜f3!N**

Surprisingly, we are threatening to go after the black queen with ♔d4 followed by b2-b4 and ♖d5 with a rook lift.

**15. ♔b1 ♔b8N** (The only game here ended rather quickly after 15... ♙e7?? 16. ♖d5) 16.f5 is a different plan, but I am a little sceptical about how easy it will be for White to break through. (I also considered 16. ♜f3 ♙c6 17. ♜h3 f5 and Black seems to be doing quite well.)

**15. ♔d4!?N**

This has similar ideas to the main line, but it gives Black the chance to avoid some of our tactical tricks with a timely ... ♔c5. Still, Black needs to be careful.

**15... ♜h6!**

15... ♙e7 16. ♜f3! is great for White, as you will see in the note with 15... ♙e7 in the main line below.

After 15... ♜g8 16.g3 the fact that we haven't committed the rook to f3 makes our position rather pleasant. 16... ♔b8 (16... ♙e7 17. ♜f3 ♔b8 18.b4!; 16... ♔c5 17. ♔xc5† dxc5 18. ♙xh5±) 17. ♜d3 With some initiative.







17.b4! ♔c7 (17...♔a3† 18.♔b1±) 18.♘d5! exd5 19.♖c3 ♕c6  
20.exd5+–

15...♔b8 16.♔d4 is similar.

15...♔b6 is rather slow, and the h5-pawn becomes a clear target after 16.♖h3.

15...f5 16.exf5!?

White can transpose to our main line with 16.♔d4 ♖g8 17.exf5. The text move is an interesting extra option.

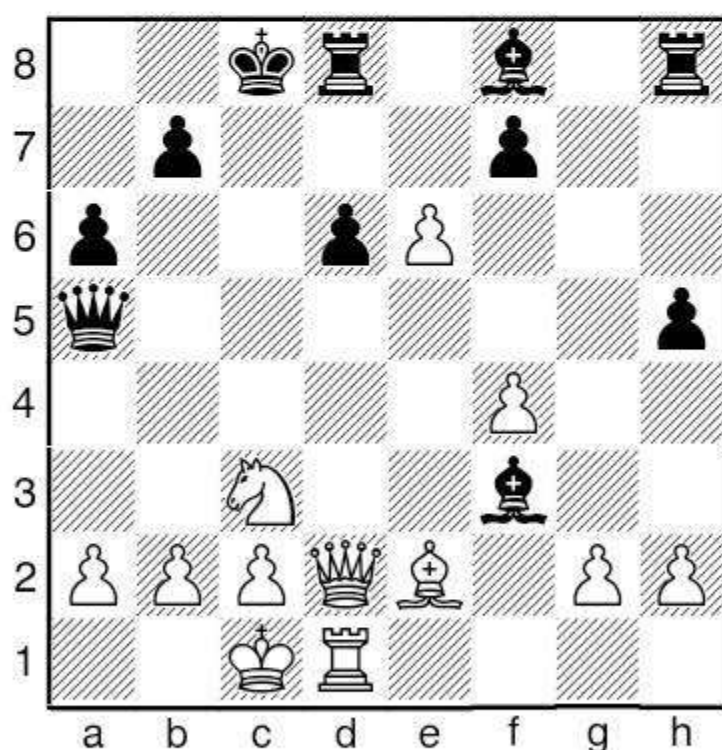
16...♕c6!?

16...♔xf5 runs into 17.♔d4!, intending ♘e4 followed by swinging the rook to the queenside.

17.fxe6

17.♖h3 ♔xf5 18.g4 ♔a5↗

17...♕xf3



18.e7! ♕xe7 19.♕xf3

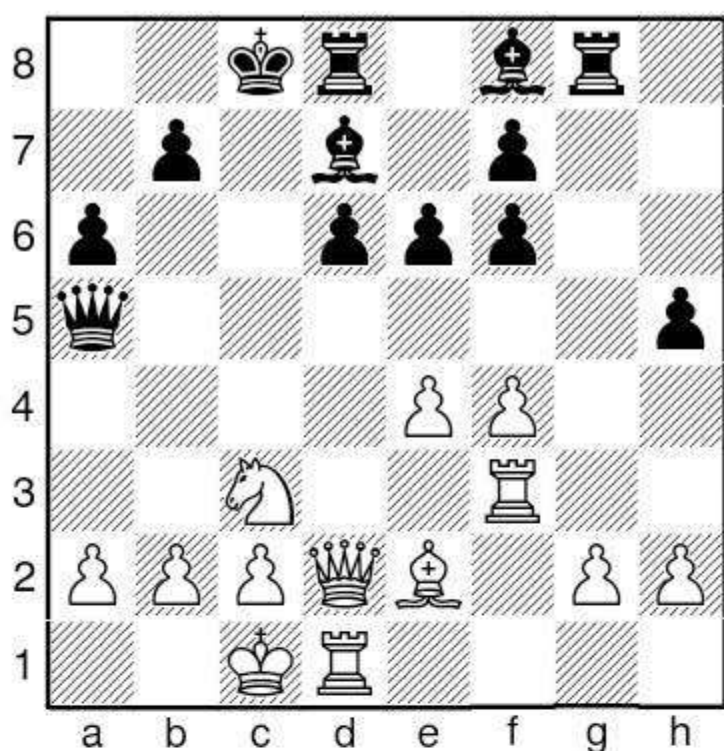
White has excellent compensation, even if Black forces a queen exchange:

19...♕f6 20.♔d5 ♔xd5 21.♘xd5 ♕g7 22.♘e7†!?

White can plonk the knight on f5 and continue to



improve his position without any real risk.



## 16. ♔d4!

The same idea again.

Defending the g2-pawn would be too slow: neither 16.g3 f5∞ nor 16.♘f1 f5 17.exf5 ♔xf5∞ is to my liking.

## 16...f5

16...♖xg2 17.♔xf6 ♘e8 (17...♘g7 18.♔xf7±) 18.♖g3! ♖xh2 19.♖g8 ♘d7 20.♔b1 Black's pieces are awkward.

## 17.exf5 ♖xg2

17...♔xf5? 18.♘e4 is nasty for Black.

17...♘c6 is not so bad, although 18.fxe6 still favours White.



## 18.fxe6

My idea is to force Black's hand by playing ♖g3 next. Black will have to either exchange the rooks and improve our structure, or take on h2, which misplaces his rook and leaves us active along the g-file.

The computer tells me that 18.♖h3 is possible, but going after the h5-pawn seems suspicious to me.

## 18...fxe6

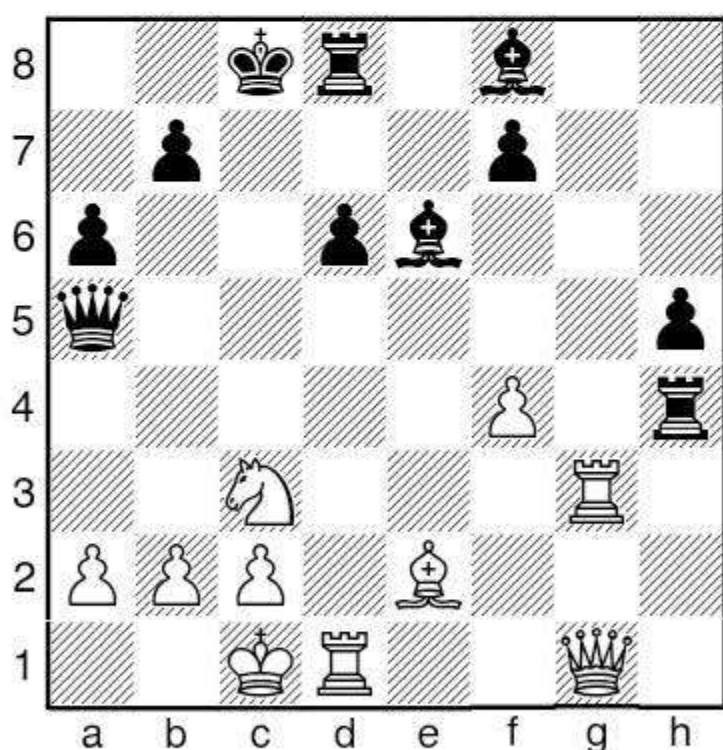
18...♙xe6 19.♖g3

19.♙f1!? ♖xh2 20.♘b5 axb5 21.♖a3 ♙g7 22.♙xg7 ♚b6 could also be explored further.

19...♖xh2

After 19...♖xg3 20.hxg3 Black's is obviously under pressure due to his poor structure.

20.♙g1 ♖h4



21.♘b5!

A pseudo-sacrifice to pick up the black queen.

21.♘d5 is met by 21...♙xd5 22.♖a3 ♚b4 23.♖xd5 ♙xf4† 24.♙b1 ♙h2 25.♙e3 ♙f4 and Black is okay.

21.♖g5 d5 22.f5 d4 23.fxe6 ♙h6 seems insanely



complicated, although of course the computer calls it equal.

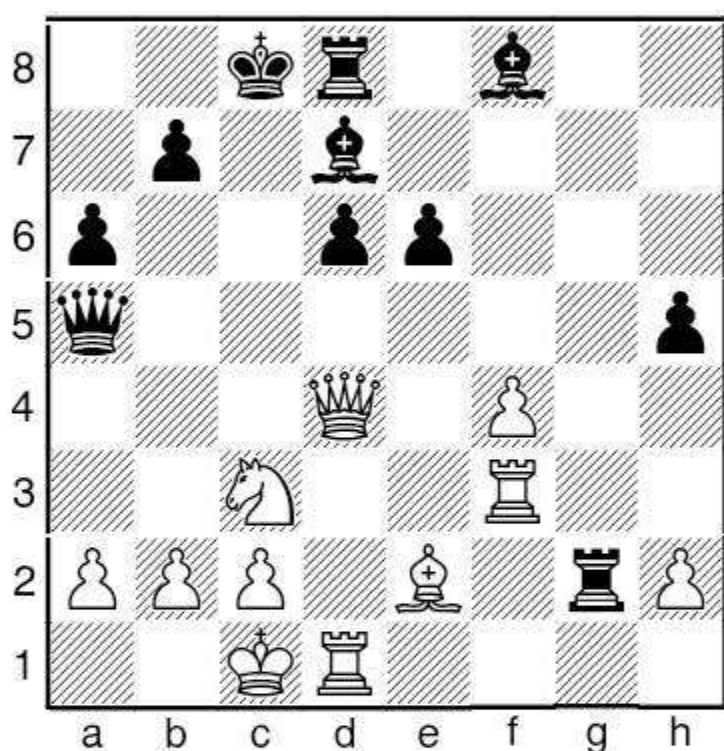
21...axb5 22.♖a3 ♕xa3

22...♕b4 23.♕b6! forces ...♕xa3 anyway.

22...♕c7 23.♙xb5 ♕c5 24.♖c3 ♕xc3 25.bxc3± does not help Black either.

23.bxa3 ♖xf4 24.♙xh5±

Black certainly has drawing chances but it seems clear that only White is trying to win – particularly since there are serious chances to develop an initiative against the black king.



19.♖g3

The same idea again: give me either the initiative or an excellent structure.

19...♖xh2

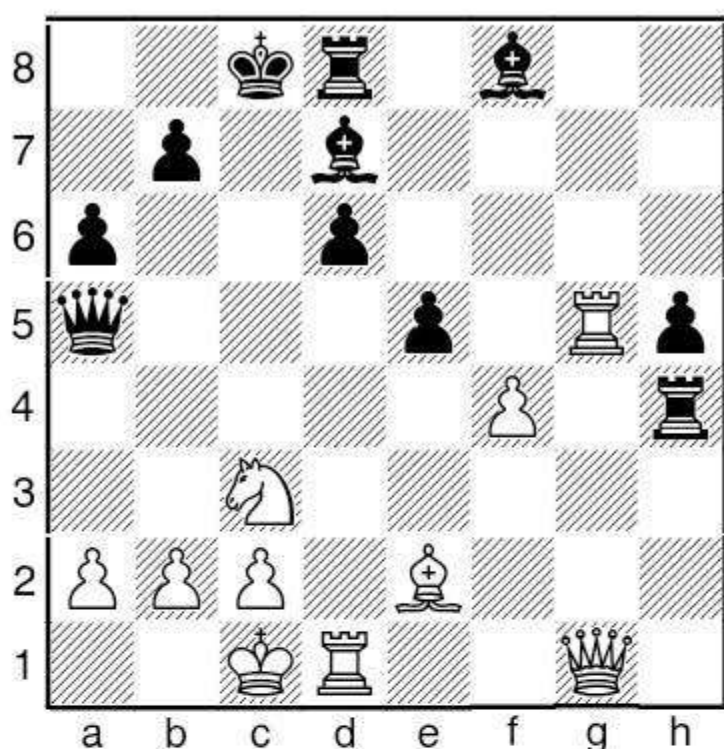
A rather dodgy move; Black is barely saving his rook from getting trapped.

19...♖xg3 20.hxg3± leaves White with a pleasant structure and a long-term plus.

20.♕g1 ♖h4 21.♖g5 e5

21...♔c7? loses material after 22.♕g3.

After the text move it is surprisingly hard to catch the h4-rook, but White has a nice tactical trick.



22.♕a7! ♕c5

22...♖xf4? 23.♘d5 wins.

22...♙c6?! 23.♖xe5! ♕b4 (23...dxe5 24.♕a8†+–) 24.♖f5±

The text move is forced, but now we can pick up the other rook.

23.♕a8† ♔c7 24.♘d5† ♕xd5 25.♕xd8† ♔xd8 26.♖xd5±

Black has reasonable chances to hold, but he will most probably have to keep defending for a long time.

## Conclusion

7...♕b6 is quite a popular route to the thematic doubled-f-pawn structure, which always produces a complicated fight. After 8.♙xf6 gxf6 9.♘b3 we started by analysing 9...♙d7, with which Black aims to save time by leaving the pawn on a7. However, the reply 10.a4 gives White good prospects on the queenside, and the main line showed how he can utilize



## 22. ♖a7! ♜c5

22... ♜xf4? 23. ♘d5 wins.

22... ♙c6?! 23. ♜xe5! ♜b4 (23... dxe5 24. ♖a8†+–) 24. ♜f5±

The text move is forced, but now we can pick up the other rook.

23. ♖a8† ♙c7 24. ♘d5† ♜xd5 25. ♖xd8† ♙xd8 26. ♜xd5±

Black has reasonable chances to hold, but he will most probably have to keep defending for a long time.

## Conclusion

7... ♖b6 is quite a popular route to the thematic doubled-f-pawn structure, which always produces a complicated fight. After 8. ♙xf6 gxf6 9. ♘b3 we started by analysing 9... ♙d7, with which Black aims to save time by leaving the pawn on a7. However, the reply 10. a4 gives White good prospects on the queenside, and the main line showed how he can utilize the b5-square to good effect.

9... a6 is more popular, and leads to a full-blooded middlegame. One of the prevailing themes is the ... ♘a5 manoeuvre and how White may deal with it. Delaying castling with 10. f4!? is certainly worth considering, although it is not a complete solution as Black can go for the as-yet-untested ... ♘a5 before castling if he is really determined to play it.

The main line continues 10. 0-0-0 ♙d7 11. f4 0-0-0 12. ♙e2 h5 13. ♜hf1, when Black must make a fundamental decision. Most nondescript moves can be met by 14. ♜f3, when White prevents the ... ♘a5 plan and patiently builds up his position. 13... ♘a5 is quite a challenging move, but my new plan involving a rook transfer along the third rank poses considerable problems.

# Chapter 14

## Rauzer



7...♘e7

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6  
6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 ♙e7 8.0-0-0 0-0

9.f4

A) 9...♙d7

B) 9...a6

C) 9...h6 10.♙h4

C1) 10...♙d7

C2) 10...e5 11.♘f5!? ♙xf5 12.exf5

C21) 12...exf4

C22) 12...♚a5!?

C3) 10...♘xd4

D) 9...♘xd4 10.♚xd4 ♚a5 11.♙e2!?

D1) 11...♖d8

D2) 11...e5

D3) 11...♙d7

D4) 11...h6 12.h4!

D41) 12...d5N

D42) 12...e5

D43) 12...♖d8



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6  
7.♚d2 ♙e7

Black develops calmly and prepares to castle before deciding how to organize his counterplay.

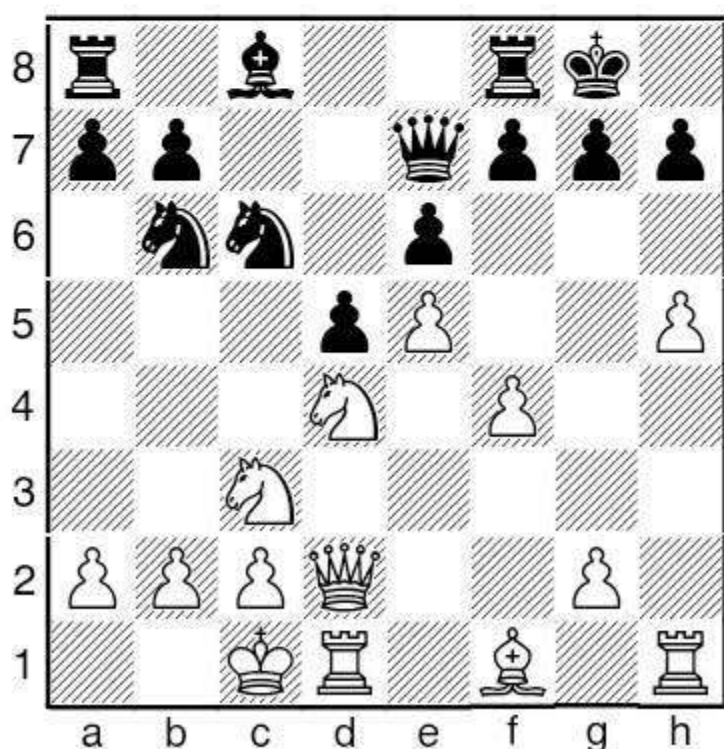
## 8.0-0 0-0

8...♘xd4 9.♚xd4 a6 (9...0-0 10.f4 reaches variation D below) 10.f4 transposes to Chapter 16.

## 9.f4

We have arrived at our first crossroads. We will analyse **A) 9...♙d7**, **B) 9...a6** and **C) 9...h6**, before examining **D) 9...♘xd4**, which is by far the most popular continuation.

9...d5 has been played a fair number of times but makes little sense, as White gets a favourable version of a French structure. 10.e5 ♘d7 11.h4!? A good move, although simply taking on e7 is good enough for an edge as well. 11...♘b6 12.♙xe7 ♚xe7 13.h5 White is waiting for ...f6, after which h5-h6 will open up the dark squares. A model example for White continued:

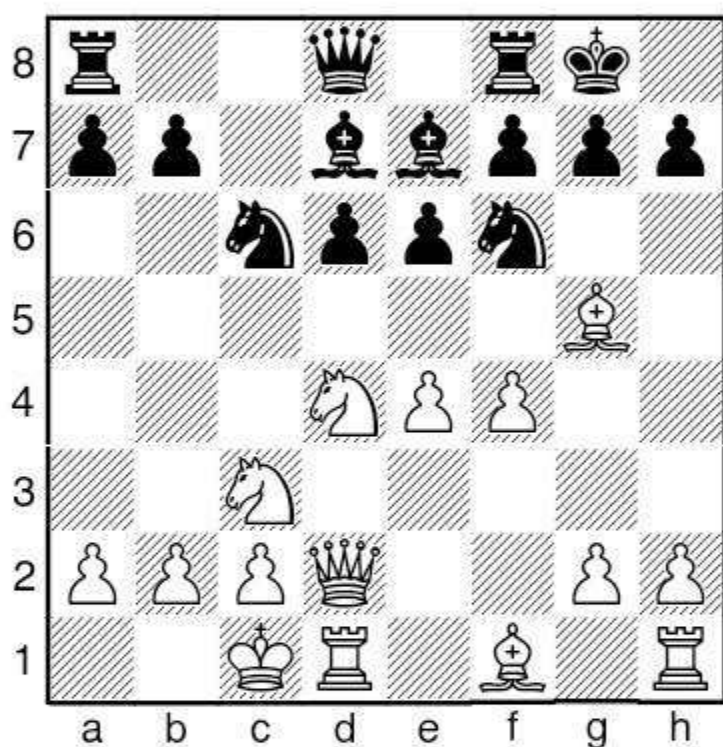


13...♙d7 14.♚e3 ♘a5 15.♙b1 ♖ac8 16.♖h3 ♘bc4 17.♙xc4 ♘xc4  
18.♚e1 f5 19.exf6 ♚xf6 20.h6 g6 21.♖f3 ♖ce8 22.b3 ♘b6

23.g4± Hracek – Korchnoi, Brno 1992.

9...e5 can be compared with variation C2. This version makes less sense for Black, as we have the simple option of 10.♘f3!? (although 10.♘f5 ♙xf5 11.exf5 is playable too). The point, of course, is that ...exf4 is not a big deal with the bishop still on g5. 10...♙g4 (10...h6?! 11.♙xf6 ♙xf6 12.f5±; 10...exf4 11.♙xf4±) 11.h3 ♙xf3 12.gxf3 ♘d4 13.♚e3!?N± With two bishops and an open g-file, White is doing well.

### A) 9...♙d7



This rare move has been tested by a few strong players, most notably Zvjaginsev.

### 10.♘db5

This seems like the critical test, although 10.♘f3!? has also scored well.

### 10...d5 11.exd5

11.e5 was Sutovsky's choice against Zvjaginsev, but I prefer taking the pawn.

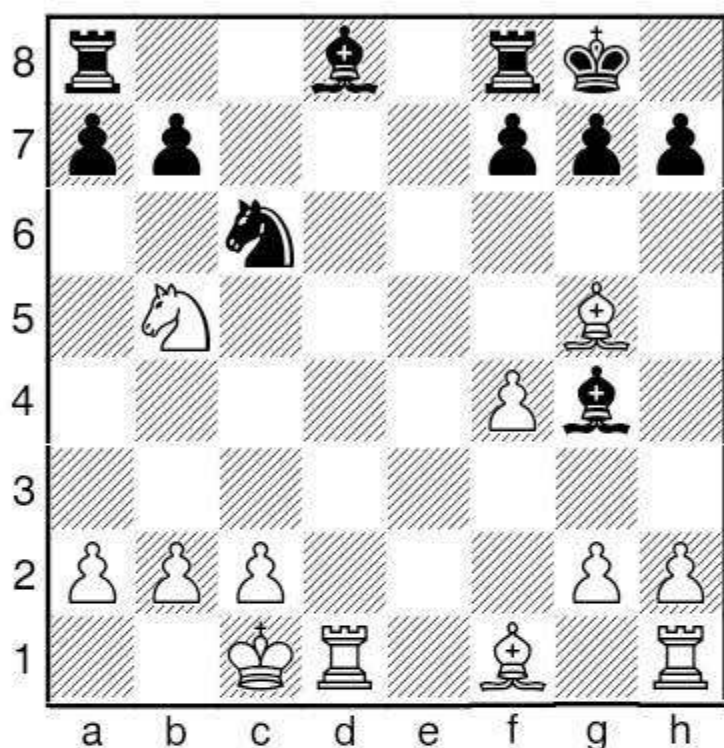
### 11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♚xd5 ♙g4



13...♙xg5 14.♚xg5N just leaves Black a pawn down for nothing.

### 14.♚xd8 ♙xd8

14...♖fxd8 15.♖xd8 ♖xd8 16.♙c4 left Black struggling for compensation in Sevestre – Francisco, email 2005. If 16...a6N 17.♘c3 ♖d4 then 18.♙xe7 ♘xe7 19.♖e1± maintains White's superiority.



### 15.♖d3!N

This improvement enables White to maintain an extra pawn in the endgame.

15.♖e1 ♙a5 16.♖e3 a6 17.♘c3 ♘d4 was better for White in Popilski – Greenfeld, Israel 2012, but 17...♖fe8!N would have offered Black decent compensation.

### 15...♙xg5

15...f6 16.♙h4±

### 16.fxg5 ♖fe8 17.h3!

17.♘c7? ♖e1† 18.♙d2 ♖d1† 19.♙c3 ♖d8! favours Black. The importance of the text move will become obvious a few moves down the line.

17...♗h5 18.♘c7 ♞e1† 19.♙d2 ♞d1† 20.♙c3 ♞d8  
20...♞xd3† 21.♗xd3 ♞c8 22.♘d5±

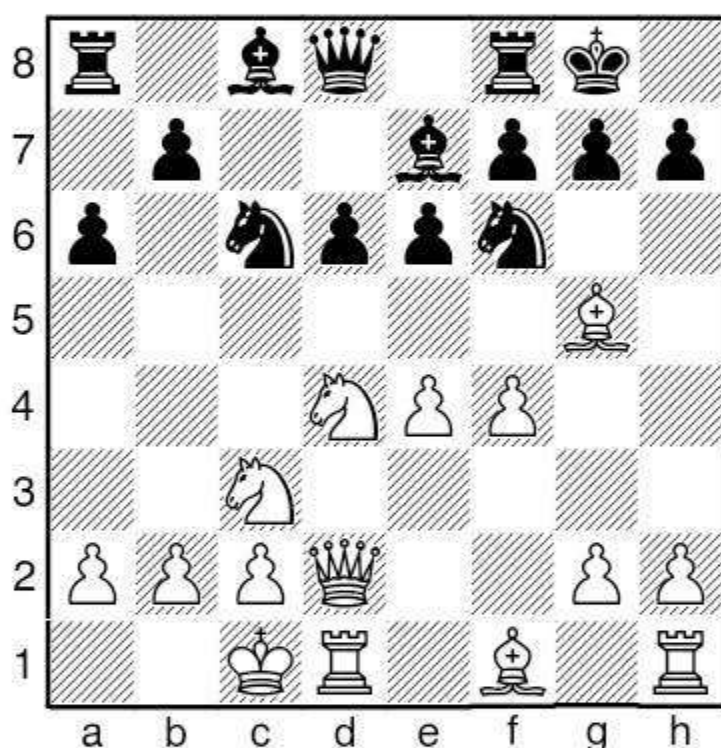
21.♞xd1 ♞xd1 22.g4!

This is why it was so important to drive the bishop to h5 on move 17.

22...♗g6 23.♗g2

White has an extra pawn and the more active pieces, so the technical conversion should be relatively easy.

### B) 9...a6



This is an inaccurate move order, as Black seems to be muddling up two different variations.

10.e5

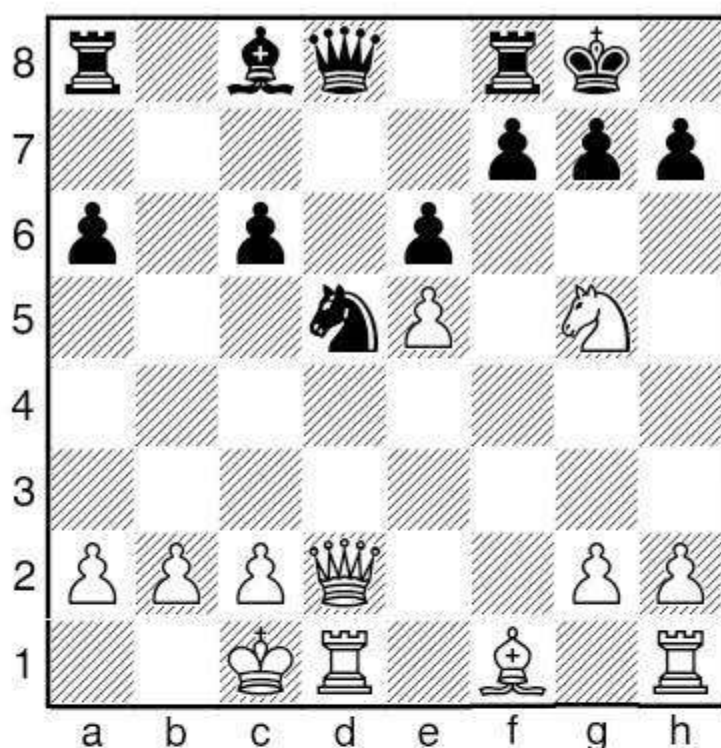
This seems simplest, although White can also consider 10.♗xf6!? gxf6, with a favourable version of a thematic structure.

10...dxe5

10...♘d5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘e4 ♗xg5 occurred in Wikman – Lehto, Helsinki 1996. The obvious 13.♘xg5N 13...dxe5



14.fxe5 gives White a pleasant edge, for instance:

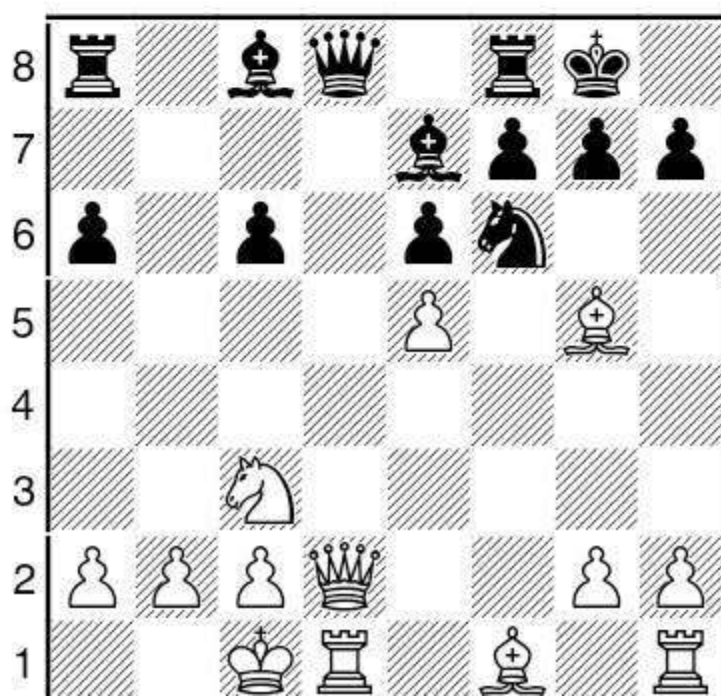


14...♔b6 (14...♔c7 15.c4±) 15.c4 ♘e3 16.♖e1 (16.♔d3 g6 17.♖d2 also leads to an advantage) 16...♘xf1 17.♖hxf1 ♖b8 18.♔c2 g6 19.♘e4↑

## 11.♘xc6 bxc6

11...♔xd2† 12.♖xd2 bxc6 13.fxe5 ♘d5 14.♙xe7 ♘xe7 15.♙d3± gives White a dream endgame which has yielded close to a 100% score in practice.

## 12.fxe5



## 12...♘d5

12...♙xd2† 13.♖xd2 transposes to the note to the previous move.

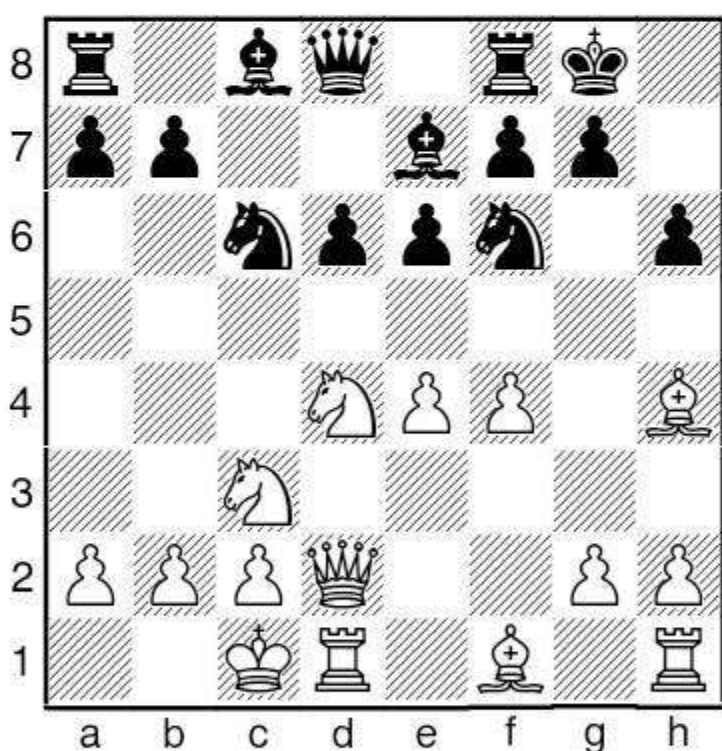
After 12...♞d7 the knight is not well placed, and White can even consider 13.h4!?, as in Keres – Szabo, Budapest 1955.

## 13.♙xe7 ♙xe7 14.♞e4±

This position has arisen in several games. White is obviously better and has achieved a healthy plus score.

### C) 9...h6 10.♙h4

10.♙xf6 ♙xf6 11.♞xc6 bxc6 12.♙xd6 ♙b6 gives Black decent compensation, so we should retreat the bishop and ask Black what he hopes to achieve by prodding our bishop.



Black's main tries are **C1)** 10...♙d7, **C2)** 10...e5 and **C3)** 10...♞xd4.

10...♞xe4? leads by force to a poor endgame for Black.

11.♙xe7 ♞xd2 12.♙xd8 ♞xf1 13.♞xc6 bxc6 14.♙e7 ♖e8

15.♖hxf1 ♖xe7 16.♖xd6± This position has been reached a few dozen times since the 1950s; the database contains a

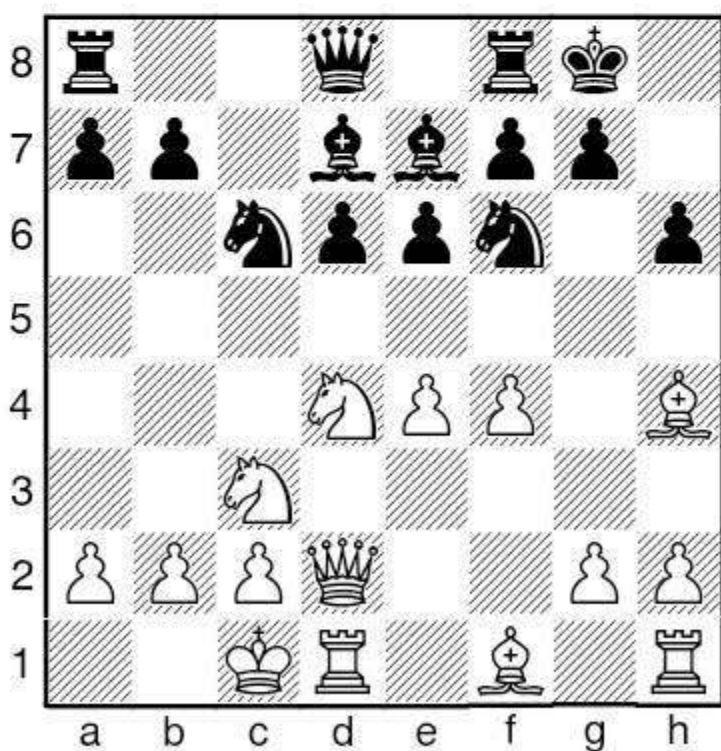


roughly even mix of wins and draws for White, without a single defeat.

10...♔c7 seems strange without ...a6, and Black was duly punished after: 11.♘db5 ♔a5 12.♔e1! (12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.♘xd6 ♖d8!☞) 12...♖d8 13.a3 ♖d7 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.♘xd6± Yudasin – D. Gurevich, Beersheba 1993.

10...♔b6 is another rather abstract queen move. It has been played by Kramnik among others, so we should definitely look at it a little closer, even though I don't see an immediate point behind it. I guess the idea may be to provoke ♙f2 and then simply retreat the queen to c7, but White can do better: 11.♘xc6!? bxc6 12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘e4 14.♘xe4 ♙xh4 15.♔f4 ♙e7 16.♙d3 ♖b8 17.b3 ♔c7 (Kramnik probably rejected 17...♙a6 on account of 18.♘f6†! ♔h8 [18...gxf6 19.exf6 ♙a3† 20.♔b1+–] 19.♔e4 ♙xd3 20.♖xd3→) 18.♔b1± Leko – Kramnik, Belgrade 1995.

### C1) 10...♙d7



This should obviously be compared to variation A above. The inclusion of ...h6 and ♙h4 dictates a change of approach for White.

## 11. ♘f3

11. ♘db5 can be met by 11... ♘xe4!, showing one advantage of driving the bishop back to h4. However, White can emphasize the drawback by preparing an attack with g4-g5.

## 11... ♔a5

11... ♘xe4 12. ♘xe4 ♙xh4

This tactical operation must always be considered, but here it gives White a choice of promising lines.

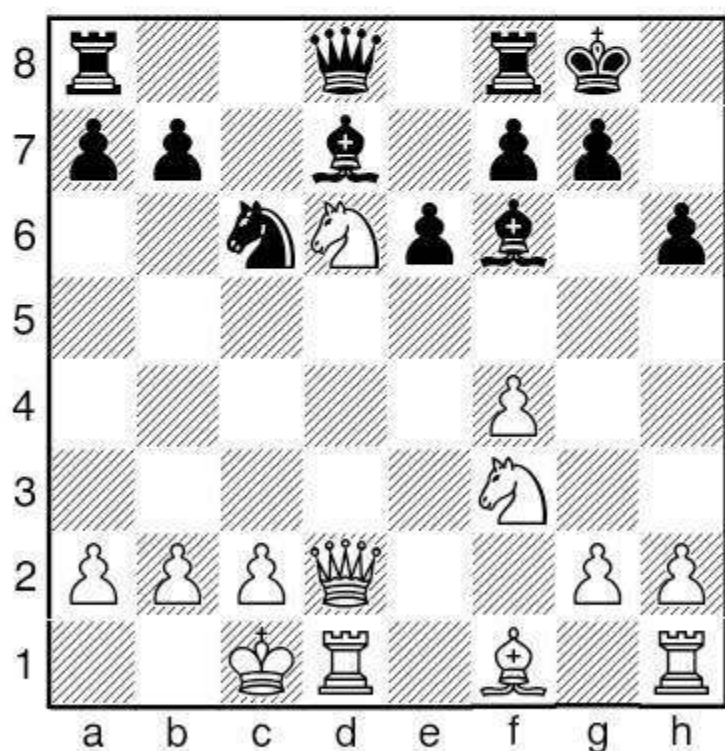
## 13. ♘xd6!?N

This new move is not really necessary, but it is interesting all the same.

13. ♘xh4 ♔xh4 14. ♘xd6 is enough for a risk-free edge.

## 13... ♙f6

13... ♙e7? just loses a pawn: 14. ♘xf7! ♖xf7 15. ♔xd7 ♔xd7 16. ♖xd7 ♖xf4 17. ♖xb7+–



## 14. g4 ♙e7!?

Black can play this now, as the f3-knight will end up hanging if White takes on f7.

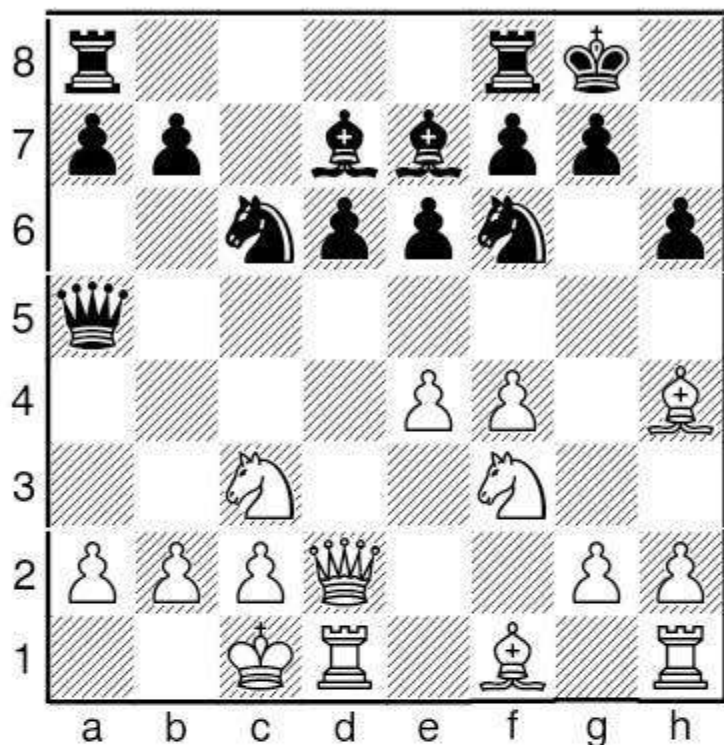
## 15. g5!?



15.♘xf7 ♖xf7 16.♙xd7 ♚xd7 17.♖xd7 ♖xf4∞

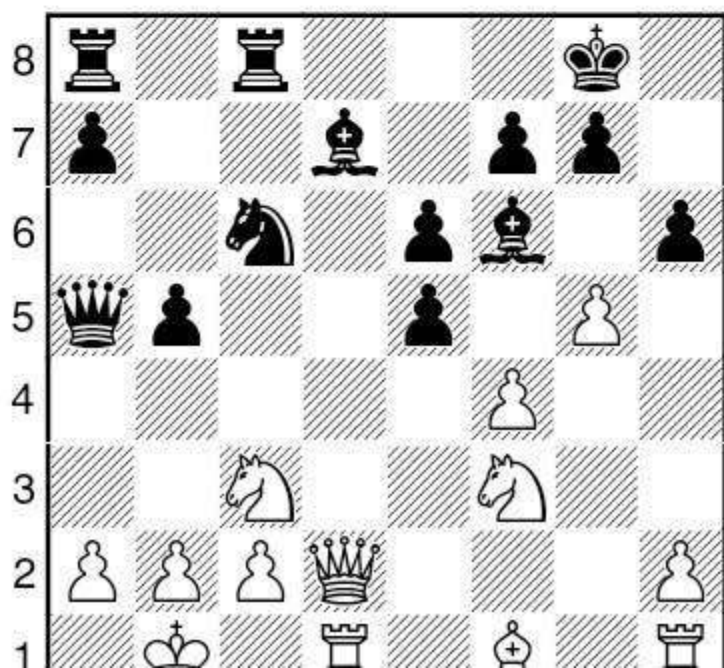
15...hxc5 16.♘xc5→

I like White's attacking chances, although whether this line is an improvement over the safe continuation mentioned at move 13 is something for you to decide for yourself.

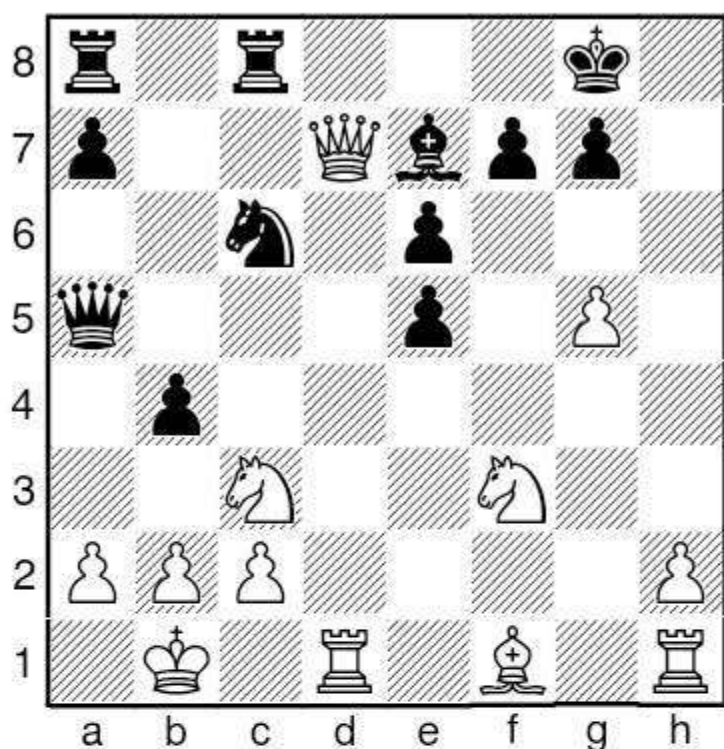


## 12.♙b1 ♖fd8

12...♖fc8 is no better: 13.g4 b5 14.♙xf6! (I like the directness of this approach, although 14.♙d3 is also possible and has scored heavily in practice) 14...♙xf6 15.e5 dxe5 16.g5! Black is heading for trouble, for instance:



16...hxg5 (16...b4 might be objectively better, but White's play remains easy. 17.♘e4 ♖e7 18.gxh6 ♖e8 Engelhard – Silva Filho, Internet 2012. 19.♖d3!?N↑) 17.fxg5 ♖e7 18.♙xd7 b4 Black eventually prevailed in Leconte – Bojkovic, Varna 2002, but White has a huge improvement available:



19.♘d5!N 19...exd5 20.g6! With a crushing attack.

### 13.♖d3!

13.g4 is not quite as purposeful with the rook on d8, as the attacking plan of ♖xf6 followed by e4-e5 and g4-g5 will not work. We also need to consider options like ...d5 for Black, so it makes sense to develop the bishop before doing anything else.

### 13...b5 14.g4 b4





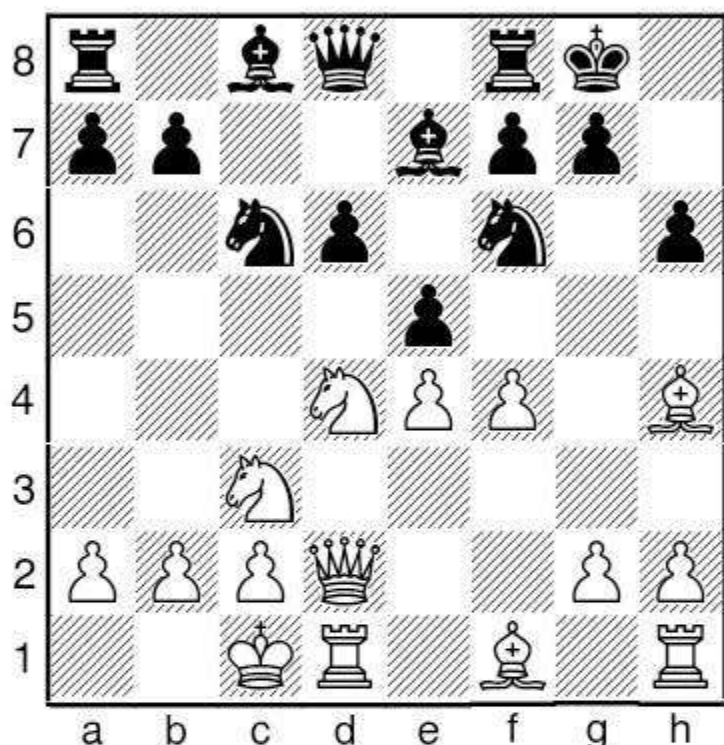
## 15. ♖xf6!?

15. ♖e2 is playable, but White will probably want to take on f6 anyway before playing g4-g5. By exchanging first, we take away the option of ... ♖xg4.

## 15... ♖xf6 16. ♖e2→

Intending g4-g5, Tiviakov – Shmuter, St Petersburg 1993.

### C2) 10...e5



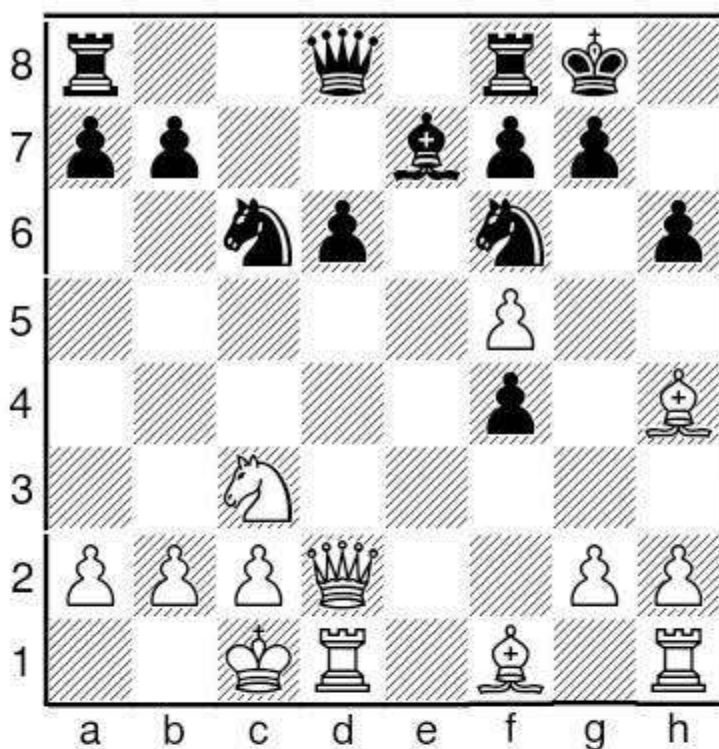
## 11. ♖f5!?

The simple 11. ♖xc6 bxc6 12. fxe5 dxe5 13. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 14. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 15. ♖c4 seems like a nice Karpovian endgame to me, and indeed the twelfth World Champion won a nice blitz game from here against Larsen. However, it has not been easy to prove an edge for White in practice, especially after 15... ♖f8! 16. ♖d1 ♖e7= as in Matulovic – Korchnoi, Rotterdam 1984.

## 11... ♖xf5 12. exf5

Black's most popular continuation has been C21) 12... exf4, but we must also consider C22) 12... ♖a5!?.

## C21) 12...exf4



### 13. ♖b1!

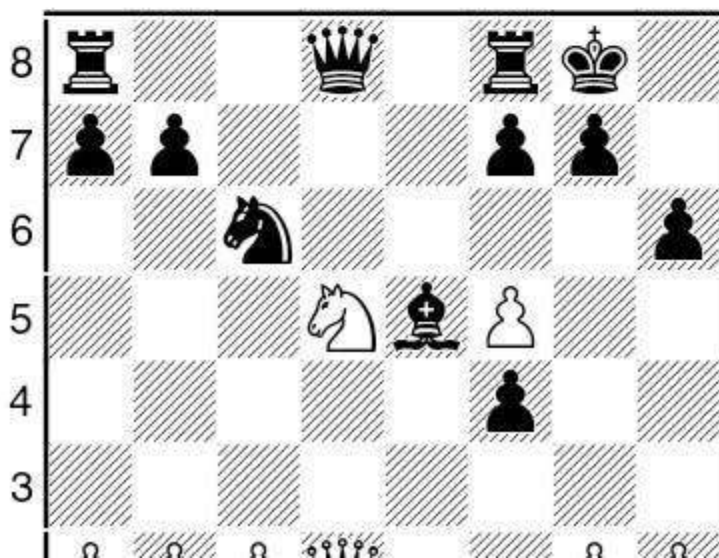
13. ♖xf4 is less accurate due to 13...d5! when 14. ♗xf6? ♗xf6 15. ♖xd5? loses to 15...♗g5.

The text move avoids this problem and leaves Black with nothing better than playing ...d5 anyway.

### 13...d5

Alternatives such as 13...♗a5 can simply be met by 14. ♖xf4±.

### 14. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15. ♘xd5 ♗e5





## 16.f6!

I prefer this move as it gives Black the least amount of counterplay.

16.♘c4 b5 17.♘b3 a5 is not so clear. 18.c3 has scored well for White, but 18...b4! is annoying.

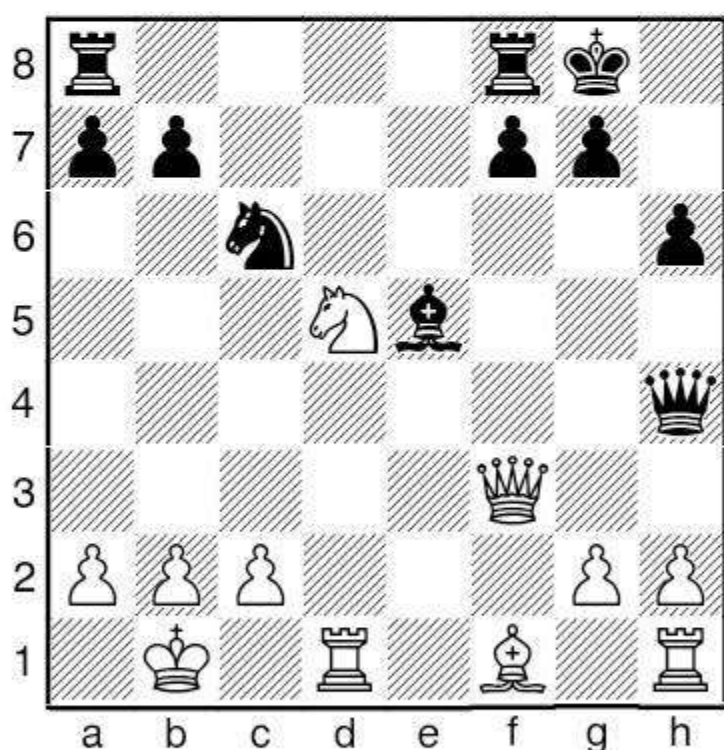
## 16...♙xf6 17.♚xf4 ♙e5 18.♚f3

White will follow up with c2-c3 to shut Black's bishop out of the game. White's knight is clearly superior, and Black also needs to find a decent square for his queen. White's position is far easier to play, even if it's just a slight edge.

## 18...♚h4

18...♚a5 19.c3 ♖ad8 20.♘c4±

18...♞d4 19.♚e4 ♖e8 20.g3 ♚d6 21.♘g2 ♞c6 22.♖he1±



19.c3 ♖ad8 20.g3 ♚g5 21.♘d3 ♖d6 22.♘c2 ♚d8 23.♖he1

By now Black's position had become distinctly unpleasant in Gopal – Nagy, Pardubice 2014.

## C22) 12...♚a5!?



This is certainly more interesting than the drab alternative shown above, which just hands White an edge on a platter. Here Black has a lot more resources; his ideas include ...♘e4 to exchange queens, or ...♖ad8 followed by ...d5.

### 13.♙c4!?

This is directed against the second of the ideas mentioned above.

13.g4 was played by Shankland in the 2014 Olympiad, but a couple of weeks later Black demonstrated a big improvement: 13...♘e4! 14.♘xe4 ♔xa2 15.♔d5 ♕xd5 16.♖xd5 ♙xh4 Black was fine in Groszpeter – Ilincic, Kecskemet 2014.

By far the most popular continuation has been:

### 13.♙b1 ♖ad8!

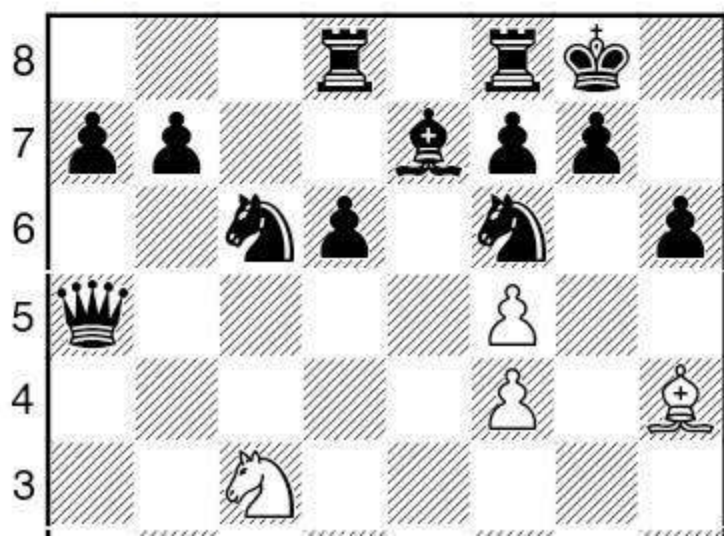
It is not so easy for White to combat the ...d5 and ...♘e4 ideas, for instance:

### 14.g3!?

Neither 14.♙c4 d5! nor 14.g4 ♘e4! lead anywhere for White.

14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.♘d5 ♕xd2 16.♖xd2 exf4! 17.♘xf6† gxf6 18.♙e2 ♖fe8 has been played in a lot of games but Black seems to be quite alright, despite the ugly pawn structure. Black is solid on the dark squares, and White will have to make some sort of concession to recover the f4-pawn.

### 14...exf4 15.gxf4





15...♞e4!N

This cuts the excitement immediately.

15...♙xf5 16.♙d3 ♔h3 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♞d5 ♔h4 gave Black a playable position in Mekhitarian – C.E. Toth, Guarapari 2012, but this line involves a wealth of interesting ideas for White. I'm not sure how well they work but, from Black's perspective, forcing the queens off just seems like a better course of action.

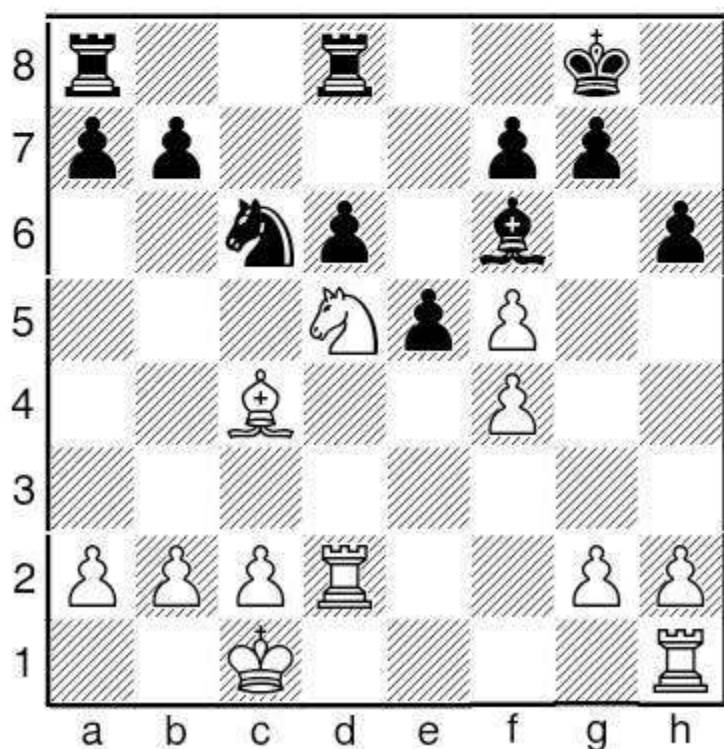
16.♞xe4 ♔xd2 17.♖xd2 ♙xh4 18.♙c4 ♞e7 19.f6 ♙xf6 20.♞xf6† gxf6

White can try for a slight edge, but I think Black should hold without too many problems.

13...♞ac8

13...♞d4 14.♔b1!N 14...♞xf5 (14...♞ac8 allows White to transpose to the main line with 15.♙b3, but 15.♞d5! is even better) 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.g4 gives Black nothing better than 16...♞ac8, when 17.♙b3 transposes to the note to Black's 15th move in the main line below.

13...♞fd8N does not make much sense here, as White has more than one way to prevent the ...d5 plan: 14.♙xf6 (14.♙b3 is also good) 14...♙xf6 15.♞d5 ♔xd2† 16.♖xd2

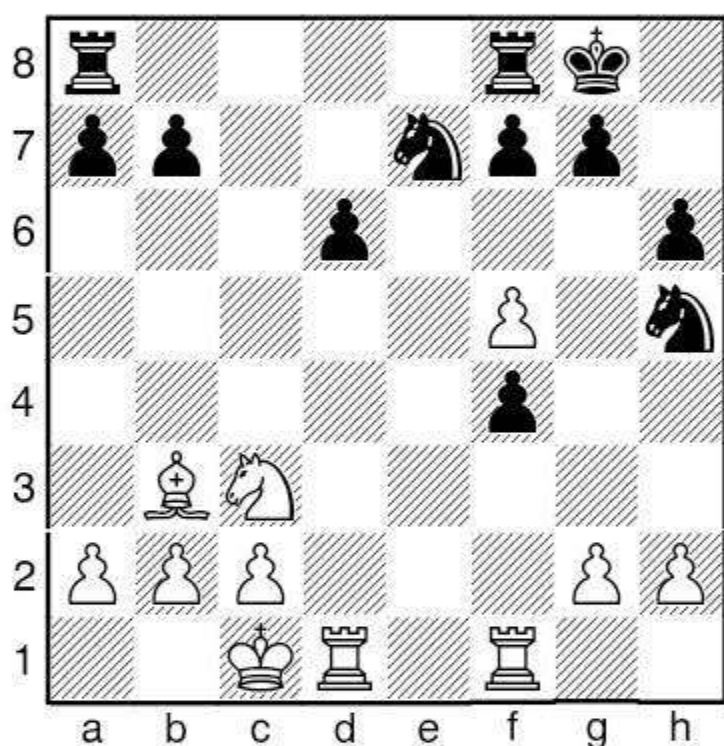




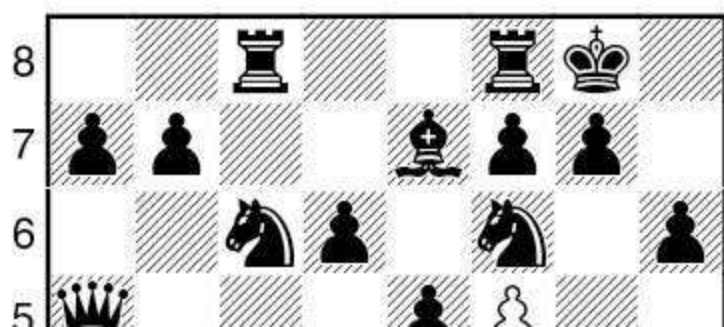
16...♖ac8 (16...exf4 17.♘xf6† gxf6 18.♞f1±; 16...♘e7 17.♘xf6† gxf6 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.♞hd1±) 17.♞hd1 ♘d4 18.♙d3 exf4 19.♘xf6† gxf6 20.♙e4±

13...♖ad8 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 was played in Smirnov – Golovin, Zvenigorod 2008, and now 15.♘d5N is similar to the note above.

13...♔b4 14.♙b3 ♔xf4 (14...exf4 15.a3 ♔a5 16.♔xf4 is bad for Black, since ...d5 isn't possible) 15.♔xf4 exf4 16.♞hf1 ♘h5 (16...♘a5 17.♞xf4 ♘xb3† 18.axb3± was an ideal endgame for White in Stefansson – Sloth, Torshavn 1997) 17.♙xe7 ♘xe7



18.♘d5 (18.♘b5±) 18...♘xd5 (18...♘xf5 19.g4!±) 19.♙xd5 ♖ad8 20.♙xb7 g5 21.fxg6!N (21.♞f3 ♞fe8 was messy in Leko – Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1994) 21...fxg6 22.♞f3± Compared with the Leko game, Black's kingside counterplay is much less dangerous.





#### 14. ♖b3!? N

Sometimes it makes sense just to try the most natural moves. In this instance we safeguard the bishop against the annoying ... ♖b4 move, and the computer's initial suggestion of ... ♘d4xf5 looks rather shady.

#### 14. ♖b1

This has been tried in a couple of correspondence games. It turns out that Black cannot exploit the open c-file so easily, but he has another way to target the undefended bishop on c4.

#### 14... ♖b4!?

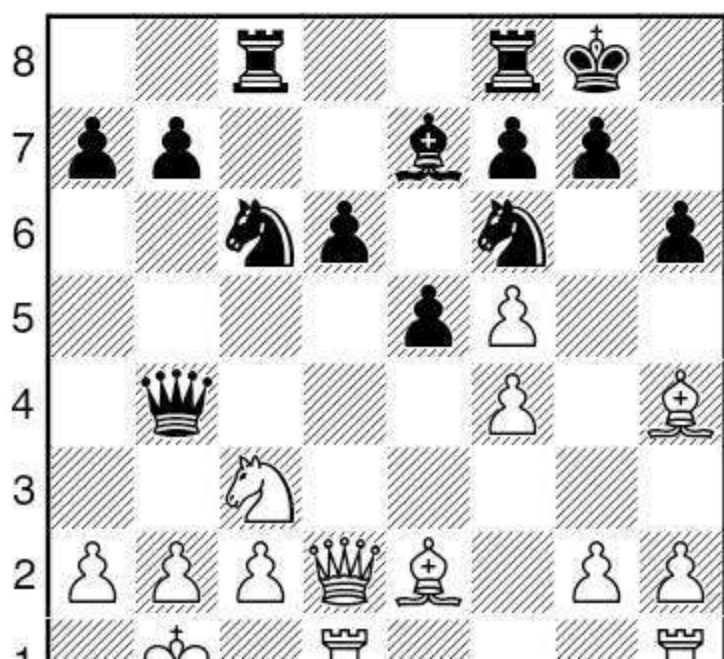
14... ♘d4 15. ♘d5! turns out well for White.

After the text move White has several options but I couldn't cause much of a dent in Black's position.

#### 15. ♖e2!?

After 15. ♖b3 ♖xf4 16. ♖xf4 exf4 17. ♖hf1 ♘h5!? Black was able to hold in Kasyan – Bultman, corr. 2013. This line can certainly be investigated in more detail but I think the computer's optimism is misplaced, as in many lines Black can give back a pawn or two and simplify into drawish endgames.

The text move has the idea of preventing ... ♘h5 in the endgame, but Black can steer the game in a different direction.

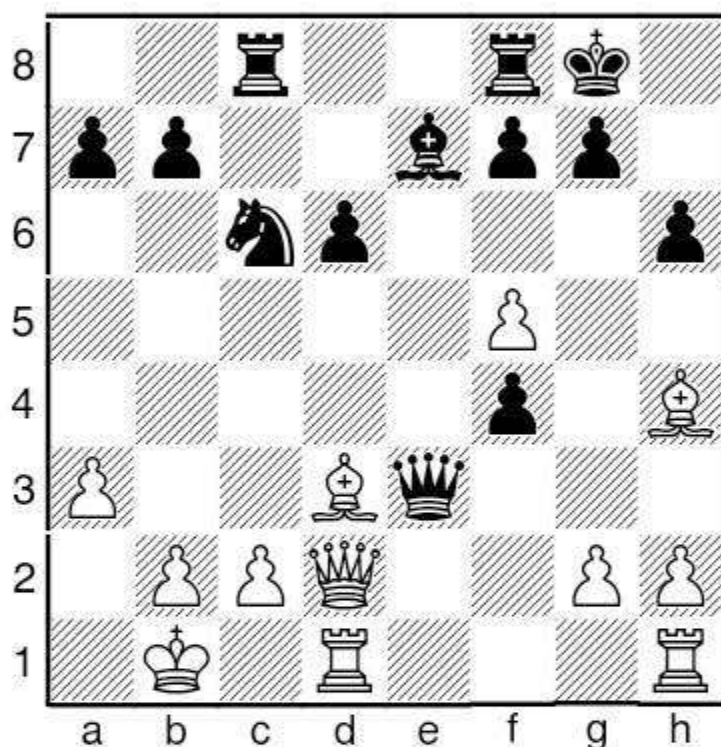


15...exf4!N

15...♔xf4 16.♔xf4 exf4 17.♖hf1 g5 (17...d5 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♘xd5 ♙g5 20.♘xf4±) 18.fxg6 fxg6 19.♙e1 was pleasant for White in Nadeev – Martynov, corr. 2014. The open kingside will cause serious headaches for Black as, even in the endgame, White should be able to generate threats with the bishop pair.

16.a3 ♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♔xe4 18.♙d3

18.f6 f3 19.fxe7 ♖fe8 20.♙xf3 ♔xh4=  
18...♔e3



19.f6! ♙xf6 20.♙xf6 ♔xd2 21.♖xd2 gxf6 22.♖f1 ♖fe8 23.♖xf4 ♖e1† 24.♔a2 ♘e5 25.♙f1

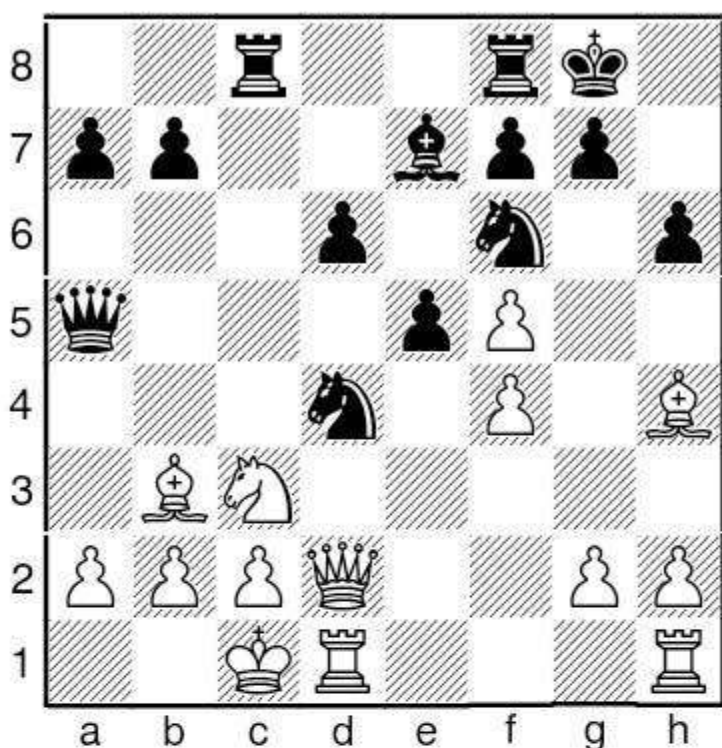
Avoiding ...♘xd3 of course. Aesthetically speaking, White's position is pleasant and he can continue to try for an edge. However, I think the move given in the main line is a better overall try for an advantage.

14...♘d4

Another interesting line is: 14...b5 15.♙xf6 (15.♔d3!?) 15...♙xf6 16.♘e4 ♔xd2† 17.♖xd2 ♘d4 (17...exf4 18.♘xf6† gxf6 19.♖xd6±) 18.♖f1 ♖c7 19.g4 ♙h4 (19...♖d8 20.g5 hxg5 21.fxg5±)



20.♙d5! (20.g5 hxg5 21.fxg5 ♖d8! 22.♙d5 ♜c5!! is an amazing trick allowing Black to survive.) The text move avoids the defence involving ...♜d8 and ...♜c5, leaving Black with the difficult task of dealing with the g4-g5 threats.



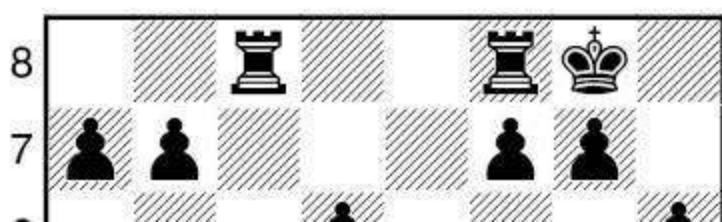
## 15.♙b1 ♘xb3

15...♘xf5 16.♙xf6! ♙xf6 17.g4 leads to a one-sided game where White's initiative counts for more than Black's extra pawn, which will probably have to be returned with ...d5 at some point if Black wishes to generate any figment of activity. A sample continuation is: 17...♘d4 18.g5 hxg5 19.fxg5 ♙d8 (19...♙e7 20.♘d5 ♙d8 21.h4±) 20.♙g2 ♘xb3 (20...♜xc3 21.bxc3 ♙xc3 22.♜hf1±) 21.cxb3±

## 16.axb3

Again, just sticking with simple moves.

16.cxb3!? is interesting, but Black has a precise way to hold everything together: 16...exf4 17.♙xf4 ♘h5 (17...♜fe8 18.♙f3±) 18.♙g4 ♙xh4 19.♙xh5!?



19...♔g5! The idea is that ♖d5 can be met by ...♙c5 when the c1-square is under Black's control. (19...♙f6 20.♘d5±) 20.♙f3 (20.♘d5 ♙c5 21.♙e2 ♜fe8 22.♙d3 ♙f2!±) 20...♙c5! Black is close to equalizing, as it is hard to prevent ...♙f6 and ...♙xc3.

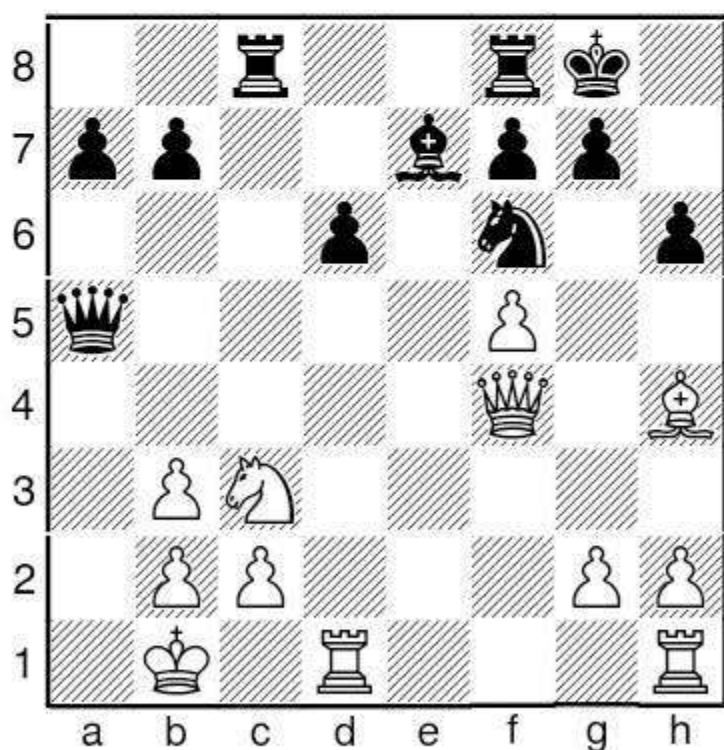
## 16...exf4

This ensures that Black will not be left with too bad a bishop.

16...♜fe8 17.fxe5 (17.g4!?) 17...dxe5 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♘e4 gives White a perfect knight, with excellent long-term chances.

## 17.♙xf4

17.♜he1 ♜fe8 18.♙xf4 ♘h5 19.♙g4 ♙xh4 20.♜xe8† ♜xe8 21.♙xh4 (21.♙xh5 ♙f6 22.♘d5 ♜e1=) 21...♘f6 22.♙f4 ♙e5= Compared to the main line below, the rook exchange clearly favours Black, as he can exploit White's weaknesses more freely.



## 17...♘h5

17...♜fe8? 18.g4± makes it hard for Black to do anything, so he should trade pieces while he has the chance.



18. ♔g4 ♕xh4 19. ♔xh4 ♖f6 20. ♔f4

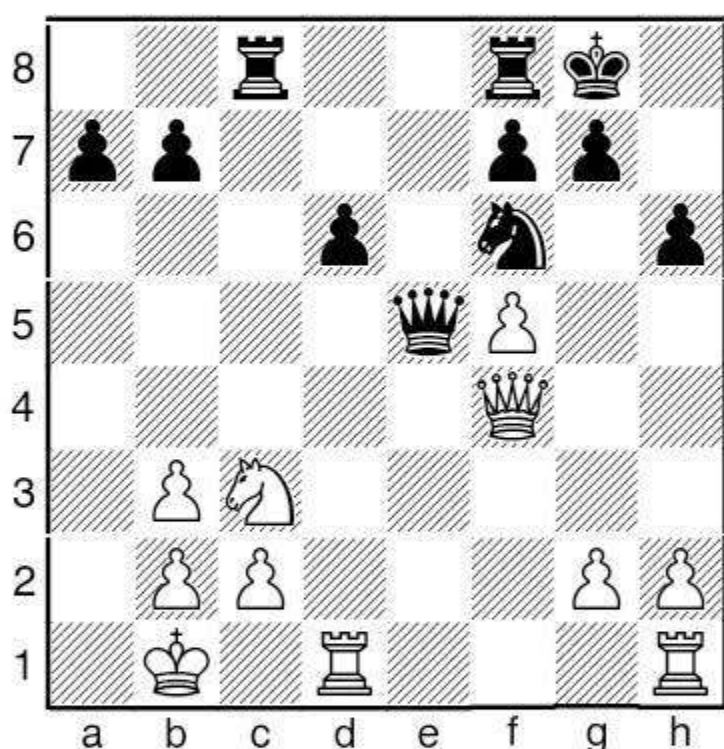
20.g4 ♕xc3! 21.bxc3 ♗e4 is fine for Black.

The text move prevents Black's counterplay and aims for an advantage with the better pawn structure.

20... ♔e5

20... ♕fe8 21. ♕xd6± is just a pawn.

20...d5 allows White to maintain control with 21. ♕he1. He can strengthen his position further by putting either the queen or rook on d4, or by advancing his pawns on the kingside.



21. ♔xe5

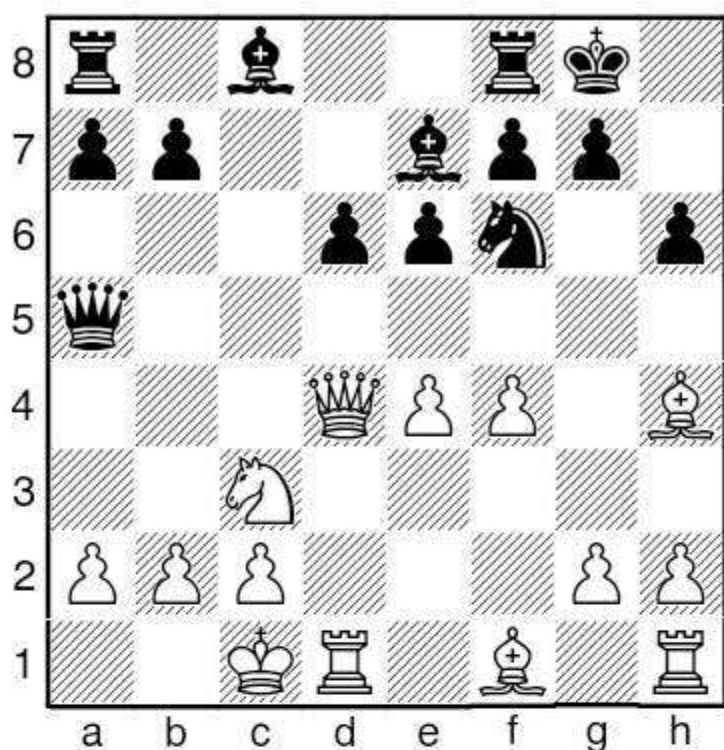
We can afford to improve Black's structure, as our pieces are better equipped to create threats, especially on the queenside.

21. ♕hf1!? is also reasonable.

21...dxe5 22. ♕he1±

Intending ♗b5 and c2-c4. Of course Black does not have to lose anything immediately, but the pressure can keep piling up.

C3) 10...♘xd4 11.♙xd4 ♔a5



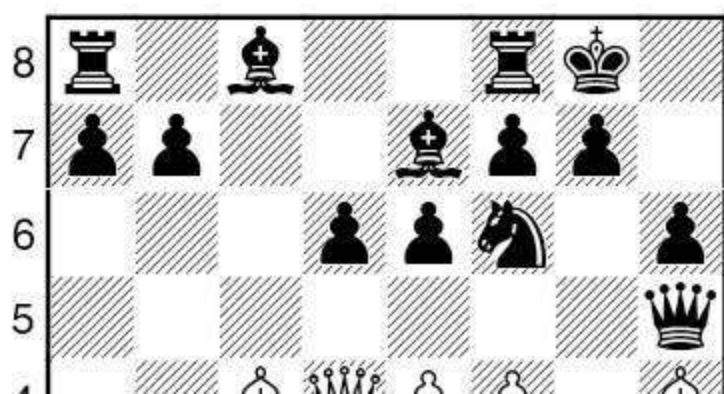
This resembles the main line of the chapter, but it makes less sense for Black after including ...h6 and ♘h4, as explained in the next note.

## 12.♙c4! e5

Black has to accept a slightly worse position with this move, as after 12...♙d7? 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 he cannot play the desired ...♙c6 as the white bishop is not hanging on g5.

## 12...♙h5!?

This interesting move has been tried in a bunch of recent games. The idea is to provoke the bishop into retreating to an unfavourable square, but for some reason the critical reply has hardly ever been played.





13.♙xf6!

13.♙f2 has not been tried. Presumably Black's idea is to play a more effective 13...e5! 14.fxe5 dxe5, when White lacks the option of ♙xf6 in the ensuing structure.

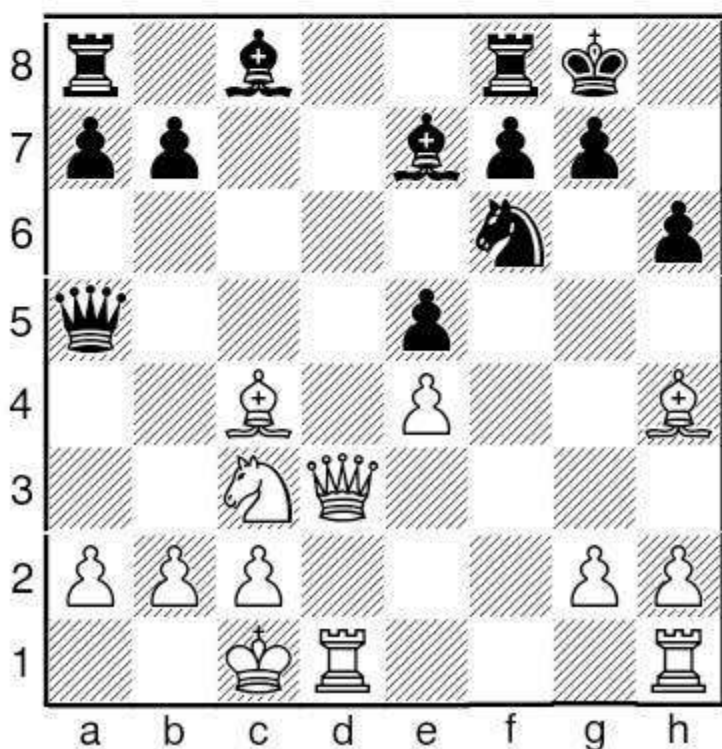
13.♙g3 slightly misplaces the bishop and after 13...♖d8 it is surprisingly hard for White to prove anything, for instance: 14.♔b1 ♙d7 15.♙e2 ♔a5 16.♙e1 ♔c7 17.g4 ♖ac8 18.g5 ♞xe4⇌ Li Chao – Greenfeld, Cannes 2014.

13...♙xf6 14.♔xd6 ♙xc3 15.bxc3±

Grabner – Wittmann, corr. 1986. White's structure seem slightly ugly, but he is ready to start play on the kingside with g2-g4. Considering Black's lack of development, I don't see much chance for him to develop an initiative.

**13.fxe5 dxe5 14.♔d3**

White's plan is simple: when the time is right, he will play ♙xf6 and ♞d5. Black might be able to reach an opposite-coloured-bishop position with ...♙e6xd5, but White will be left with a dominant bishop and pressure against f7. If Black does not take on d5 then the knight will remain extremely strong.



14...♙g4

14...♔c5 does not achieve much after 15.♙b3.

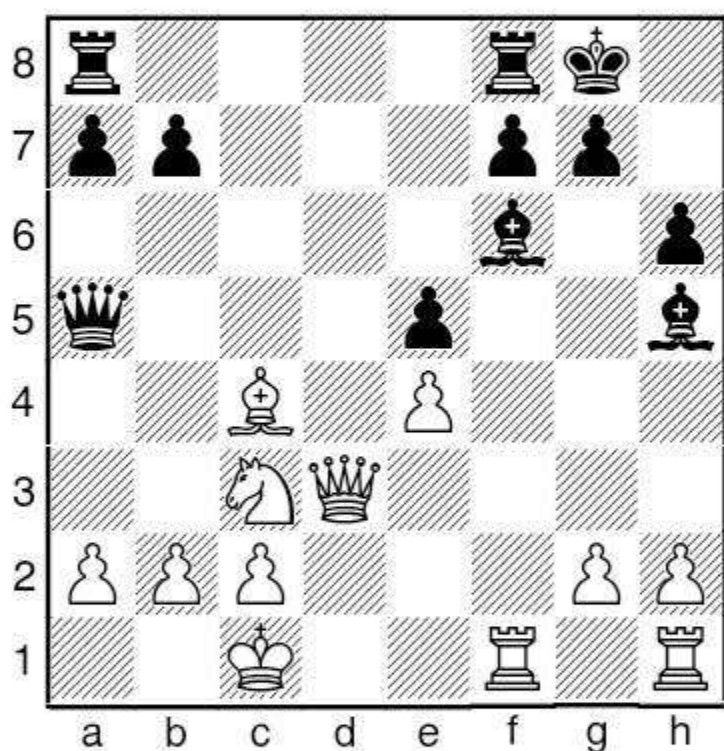
15.♖df1

Some strong players have taken on f6 first, but I would prefer to keep Black guessing for as long as possible.

15...♖ac8

Many moves have been tried, but our general strategy will remain the same. Here are a few lines to illustrate some specific tactical points.

15...♙h5? is a blunder: 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6



17.♖xf6! gxf6 18.♔h3 ♖ac8 19.♙b3 ♖xc3 (19...♙g6 20.♔xh6 ♖xc3 21.♔xg6†+–) 20.bxc3+– Yudovich – Kepper, corr. 1965.

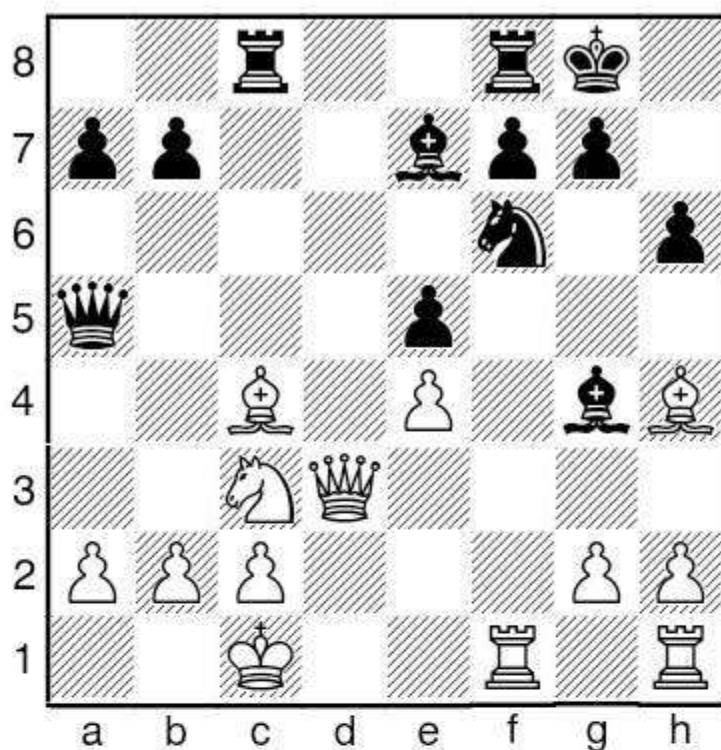
15...♖ad8 16.♔g3! is unpleasant for Black.

15...♔c5 just forces White's bishop to go to a more stable square. 16.♙b3 ♙h8 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♙b1 ♖ad8 19.♔g3± Kobalia – Gershon, Kharkov 2002.

15...♙e6!? is interesting, but White keeps a nice edge by avoiding the temptation to double Black's pawns – the d5-



square is more important! 16.♙xf6 ♜xf6 17.♚b1 ♜h4  
 ♜h8 19.h4± Ponomariov – Avrukh, Panormo 2001.

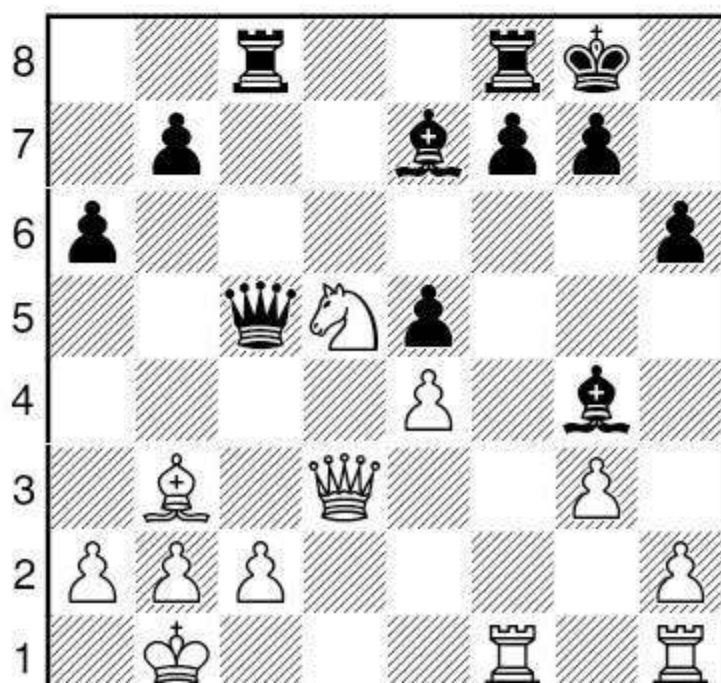


16.♙xf6 ♜xf6 17.♚b1 ♜h4

Black provokes g2-g3 in order to stop the white queen from using that square. The position remains preferable for White though.

18.g3 ♜e7 19.♘d5 ♚c5 20.♙b3 a6

Another example continued: 20...♜h3 21.♖d1 ♜g4 22.♖dg1  
 ♜cd8 23.h3 ♜e6 24.♚e2 ♜d7 25.♖f1 ♜fd8 26.h4 b5 27.g4 a5  
 28.a3± Alsina Leal – Torrecillas Martinez, Catalonia 2012.



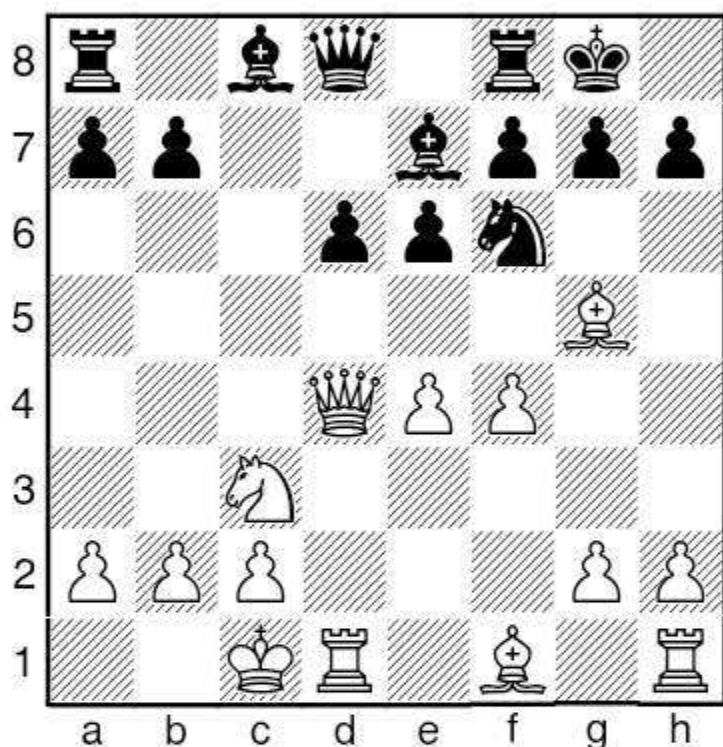
21.h3 ♖e6 22.♔e2 b5 23.♟f3 ♚a7 24.♟hf1 ♚b7 25.a3 ♖d8  
26.g4 ♖h4 27.♔h2 ♚b8

These moves may not represent computer-accurate play, but it doesn't matter too much in this type of position.

28.♘e3 g6 29.♖xe6 fxe6 30.♘g2 ♟xf3 31.♟xf3 ♖g5 32.h4±

White changed the pawn structure when it suited him and retained a plus in Sutovsky – Gulko, Montreal 2006.

D) 9...♘xd4 10.♚xd4



10...♚a5

This is the overwhelmingly most popular follow-up to the knight exchange.

10...♖d7 is provocative but not outright bad. 11.e5!? (The direct 11.♖xf6 ♖xf6 12.e5 ♖e7 13.exd6 ♖f6 gives Black some compensation, although one gets the feeling that White should be better somehow) 11...dxe5 12.fxe5 ♘d5 13.♖xe7 ♚xe7 14.♘xd5 exd5 15.♖d3 White has slightly the more pleasant game in a typical structure. A good example continued:





15...♖ac8 16.♞hf1 ♞c5 17.♞h4 g6 18.♞b1 d4 19.♞f4 ♙e6  
20.h4↑ Sutovsky – Abasov, Baku 2013.

10...♞c7

This queen move might offer Black some tricky additional options in the event that White tries to follow the main theoretical lines after 10...♞a5. However, if White uses the same system as in our main line, Black does not seem to have much to offer.

11.♙e2 ♞d8

This has been played in all three of the games from this position.

11...h6?! 12.♙xf6 (12.h4 leads to interesting play but it is not required here) 12...♙xf6 13.♞xd6 White wins a pawn for virtually no compensation.

11...e5N 12.♞e3 can be compared to variation D2 below; I don't see any reason why Black would want his queen on c7 instead of a5.

12.e5 dxe5 13.♞xe5 ♞b6

We have transposed to variation D1 below.

This position has occurred in more than two-thousand games. Amazingly, my preferred continuation has been practically ignored.

11.♙e2!?

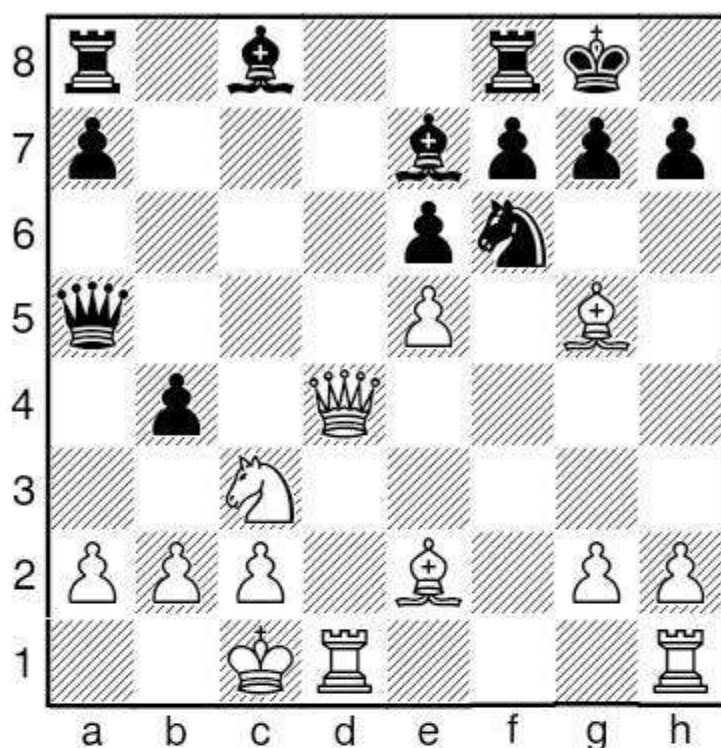
11.♙c4 has been an almost automatic choice for most players, but 11...♙d7 12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♙c6 reaches a complex tabiya which is still being debated.

The text move appears innocuous and its purpose might not be immediately obvious, but things will become clearer as the analysis unfolds, especially after 11...♙d7. Actually it is not at all clear how Black should complete his development.

We will analyse **D1)** 11...♞d8, **D2)** 11...e5, **D3)** 11...♙d7 and **D4)** 11...h6.

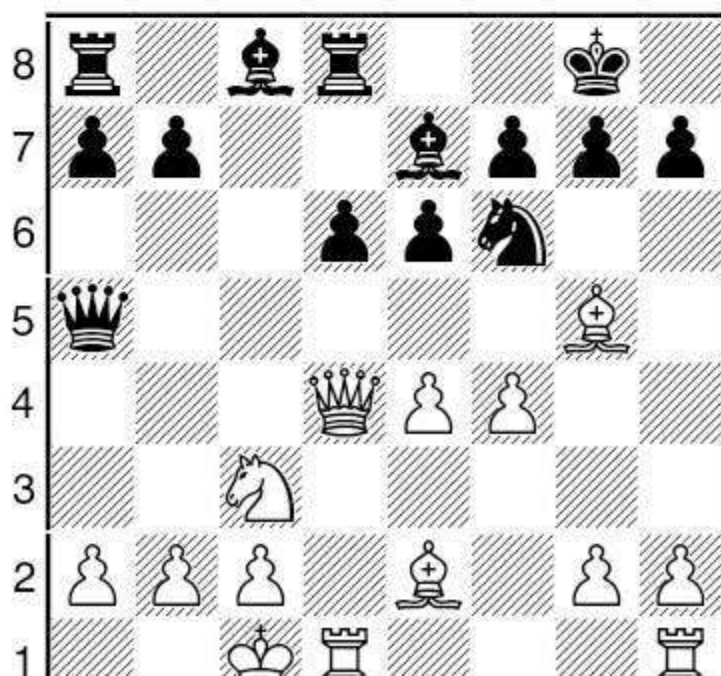
11...b5 has only been played a few times. A logical

continuation is: 12.e5 (12.♙xb5 is certainly playable, but it transposes to a position that has been reached many times via the 11.♙c4 move order) 12...dxe5 13.fxe5 b4 Harmon – Tomkins, Seattle 1983.



14.♙xf6!?N (14.♘e4N 14...♘d5 15.♙c4 ♙xg5† 16.♘xg5 also looks somewhat preferable for White) 14...♙xf6 15.exf6 bxc3 16.fxg7 cxb2† 17.♙b1 ♖e8 18.♙h4! Both kings have had their shelters compromised, but it seems to me that Black is in more danger.

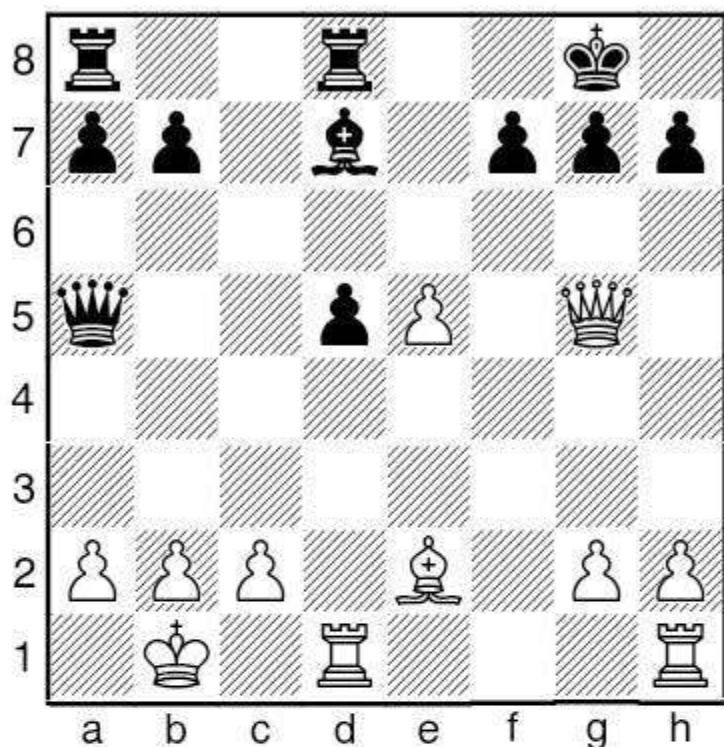
### D1) 11...♖d8





## 12.e5!

12.♔e3 is similar to variation D43 below, but it is less effective without ...h6 and h2-h4 included. 12...♙d7 13.e5 (After 13.♔g3N 13...♖ac8 there is no pawn to capture on h6, and 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 ♘d5 reaches an unclear position) 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♘d5 15.♘xd5 ♙xg5 16.♔xg5 exd5 17.♚b1

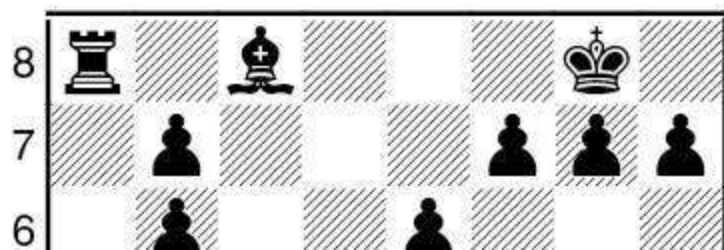


17...d4! (17...♖ac8 18.♖d4 ♙b5 19.♙f3±; ) 18.♖xd4 ♙e6 19.♖xd8† ♖xd8 20.b3 In Toshkov – Spassov, Sofia 1982, 20...h6N 21.♔f4 ♖d5 would have brought Black extremely close to full equality.

## 12...dxe5 13.♔xe5 ♔b6 14.f5! ♖xd1†

14...♙d7 J. Geller – Sazanova, Samara 2013. 15.fxe6!?N (The game continuation of 15.♙e3 is annoying for Black as well) 15...♔xe6 16.♔xe6 ♙xe6 17.♙f3±

14...♘g4N 15.♖xd8† ♙xd8 16.♙xd8 ♘xe5 17.♙xb6 axb6 18.♖d1 reaches a tough endgame for Black:

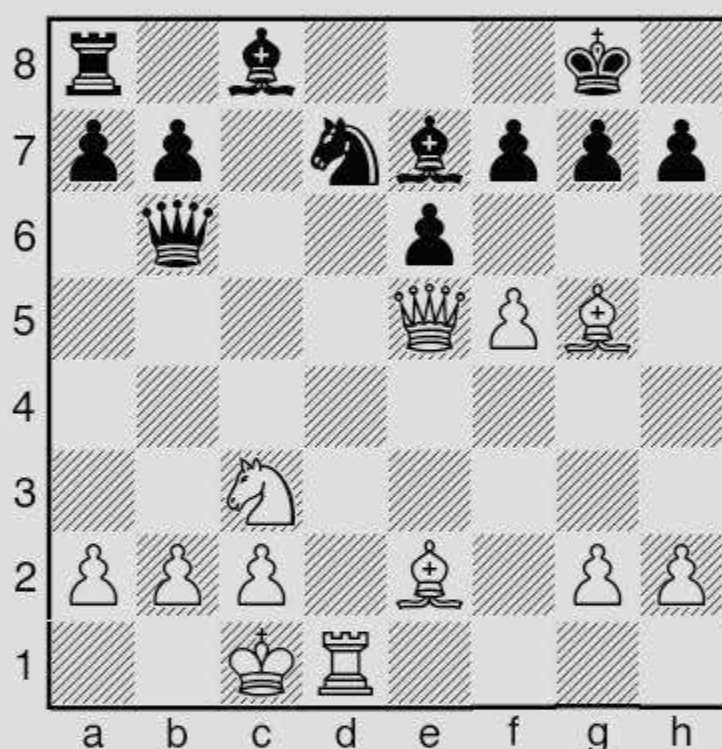


18...♙d7 19.fxe6 ♙xe6 20.♖d6 ♘c6 21.♙f3 ♖d8 22.♖xd8† ♘xd8  
23.♘a4!±

15.♖xd1 ♘d7

15...♘g4 16.♙xg4 ♙xg5† 17.♔b1 leaves White with a clear advantage in piece activity. An important detail is that 17...♙f6? 18.♘d5! wins immediately.

In Avalos Parra – Garcia Cardenas, Antofagasta 2012, White bizarrely captured on e7 and resigned after ...♘xe5. He could have kept a powerful initiative with:



16.♙g3N 16...♘f6

16...♙xg5† 17.♙xg5↑

17.♙h6 ♙f8 18.♙f4 exf5

18...♙e7 19.♙e5 leaves Black under serious pressure on the kingside.

19.♙c7 ♙e6 20.♖d8

White has an overwhelming initiative.

D2) 11...e5 12.♙e3





This is the typical retreat square for the queen (compare the later variation D42).

## 12...exf4

12...♙e6 13.a3N (13.f5 ♙xa2! would create a huge mess)  
13...h6 (13...exf4 14.♙xf4±) 14.♙xh6! gxh6 15.f5 gives White a great attack.

## 13.♙xf4

My main plan from here involves g4-g5 and ♘d5. If White can carry this out successfully he will have an ideal position: Black's counterplay will be stifled while White's kingside will be raring to go.

## 13...♙e6!?N

This seems like the most obvious developing move, and it's an obvious attempt to improve Black's play.

Here is a game where the aforementioned attacking plan brought me a nice win:

13...♖d8 14.a3

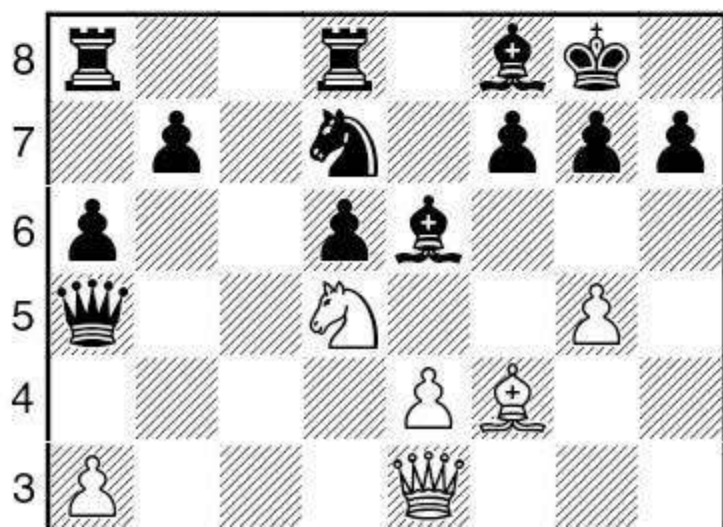
14.g4!? could also be played immediately, but there is nothing wrong with the text move either.

14...a6

14...♙e6 transposes to our main line.

15.g4 ♙e6 16.g5 ♘d7 17.♘d5 ♙f8

Black's position might appear solid, but in fact it is close to lost.

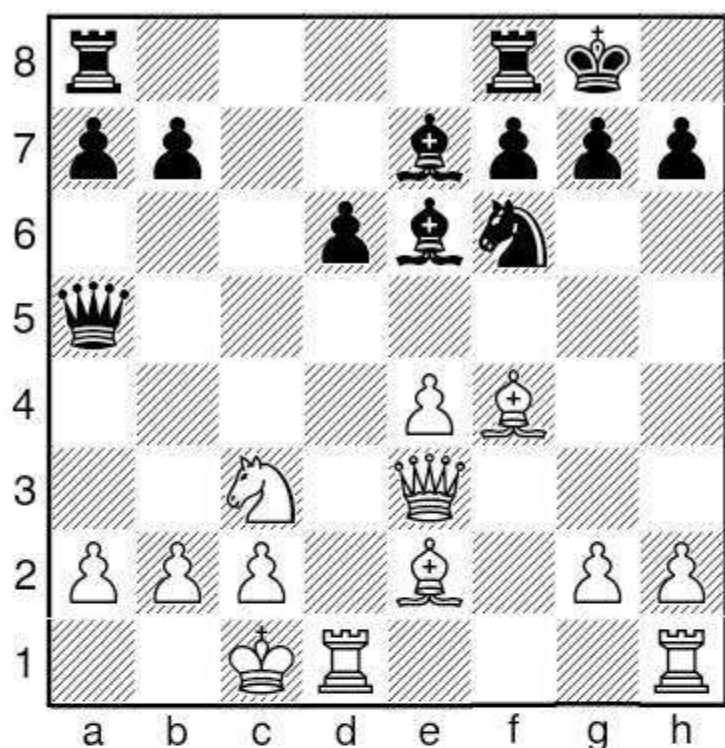


18.h4 ♖ac8 19.h5 ♔c5 20.♗d2 ♞e5 21.g6

White's attacking plan is simple but extremely effective.

21...fxg6 22.hxg6 ♞xg6 23.♕e3 ♖c6 24.♕d3

I soon won in Negi – Karthikeyan, Nagpur 2008.



**14.a3!?**

This is the simplest solution.

14.g4 ♖ac8 15.g5?! ♖xc3! is dangerous.

14.♕xd6!?! ♕xd6 15.♖xd6

This is an interesting but unnecessarily complicated continuation, so I will just provide a few sample lines to serve as a starting point for further analysis.

15...♕xa2

15...♖ac8 16.a3±

16.♖xf6!?! gxf6 17.♗g3† ♔h8 18.♗h4 ♖g8

18...♔g7 19.♗g4† ♔h8 20.♗f5! is a nice idea, as 20...♗xf5 21.exf5± leaves the bishop trapped on a2.

18...♕e6!?! 19.♗xf6† ♔g8 would need to be analysed in greater depth to determine if White can get more than a draw.

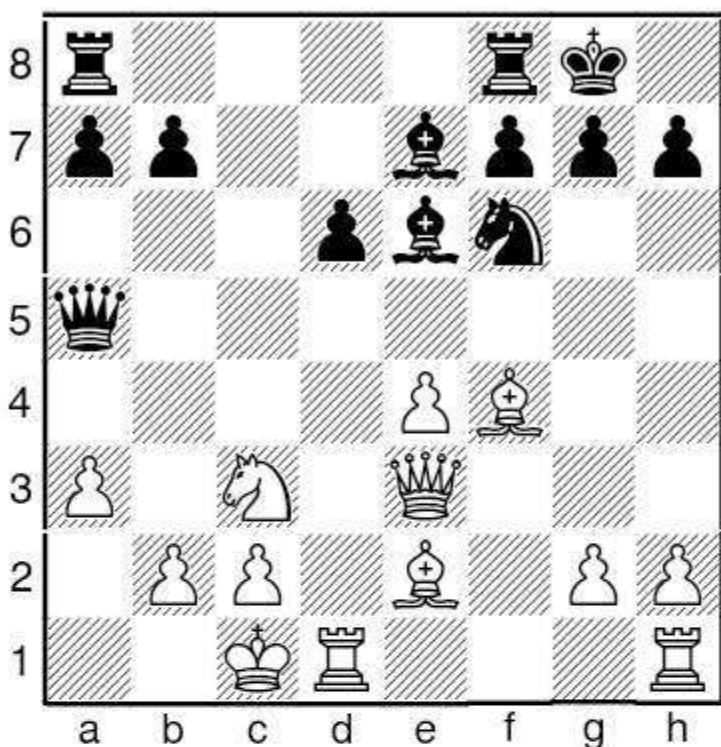
19.♗xf6† ♖g7 20.♗f5! b5

20...♗xf5 21.exf5± leaves Black's bishop trapped again.



21. ♖xb5 ♜xb5 22. ♙xb5 ♜e6 23. g3 ♜d8 24. ♙d3±

White can improve his position with ♔d2-e3 and ♜a1, with some winning chances. Still, with the assessment of 18... ♙e6!? being uncertain, I would suggest sticking with the main line, as it seems to offer White better chances with minimal fuss.



**14... ♜fd8**

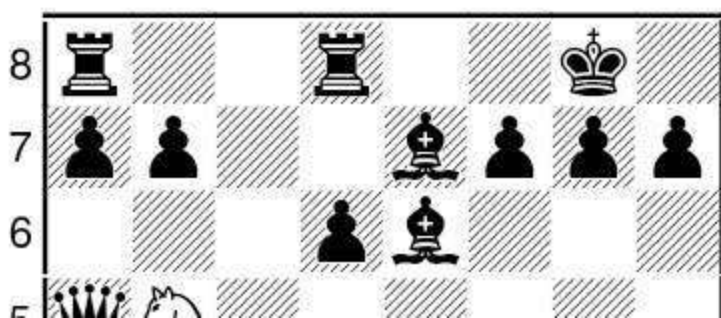
14... ♜ac8 15. ♙xd6±

**15. ♘b5!**

15. ♔b1 ♜ac8 16. ♙f3 isn't the prettiest move, but after 16... a6 17. ♘d5 ♙xd5 18. exd5 ♙f8 19. g4± I like White's chances in this particular structure. The text move seems more convincing though.

**15... ♘g4**

15... ♜ac8 16. ♙xd6 just wins a pawn.



**16. ♔g3 ♖f6**

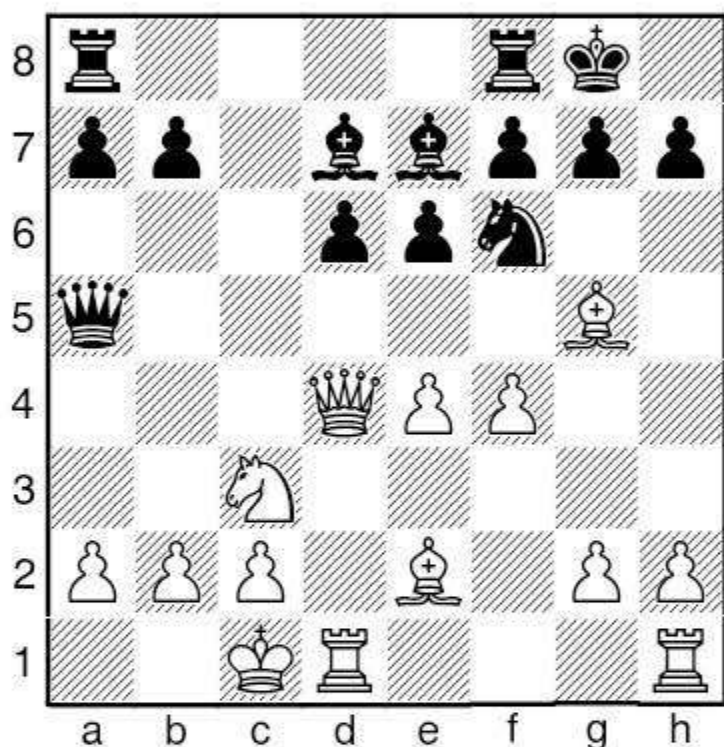
Hitting the e4-pawn so that White does not get time to take on d6.

**16... ♘e5 17. ♘xd6!±** wins a pawn.

**17. ♕d2! ♔b6 18. ♖c3 a6 19. ♖d4!±**

White has not won a pawn but, after ♘c3 on the next move, his pieces will be perfectly regrouped.

### D3) 11... ♖d7



This has been played many times, which is not surprising considering that it's the main line against the more common 11. ♖c4. Strangely enough, hardly any White player has managed to expose the tactical drawback of Black's position.

**12. e5 dxe5 13. fxe5 ♜fd8!?!N**

**13... ♖c6?!**

This is the usual move when White's bishop is on c4, so it is not surprising that it has been played in almost all the games in this line. However, it walks into a thunderbolt.

**14. ♖xf6! gxf6**



15.♘d5!!

This resource is perhaps the single biggest reason to prefer 11.♙e2 over 11.♙c4. Now White's bishop will not be left hanging!

15...♙xd5 16.exf6 ♙xf6

16...♖b4 17.♖e5 ♙xf6 18.♖xf6 leaves Black's king seriously exposed.

17.♖xf6 ♙e4!?N

17...♖xa2? 18.♖d4! wins.

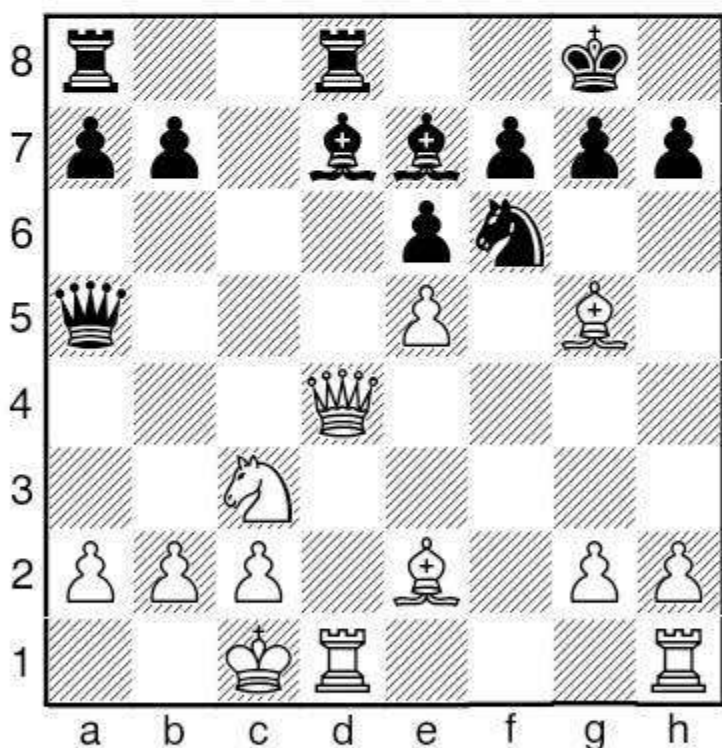
17...♖d8 was played in Perez Guerra – Rubio Doblas, Malaga 2013. After 18.♖e5!N Black has a hard time relieving the pressure in the centre. 18...♖c8 19.♙f3±

18.♙d3 ♙g6 19.h4 ♖fd8

19...♖xa2? 20.h5+–

20.h5! ♙xd3 21.h6! ♔f8 22.♖xd3 ♖xd3 23.cxd3

Black's position remains highly unpleasant.



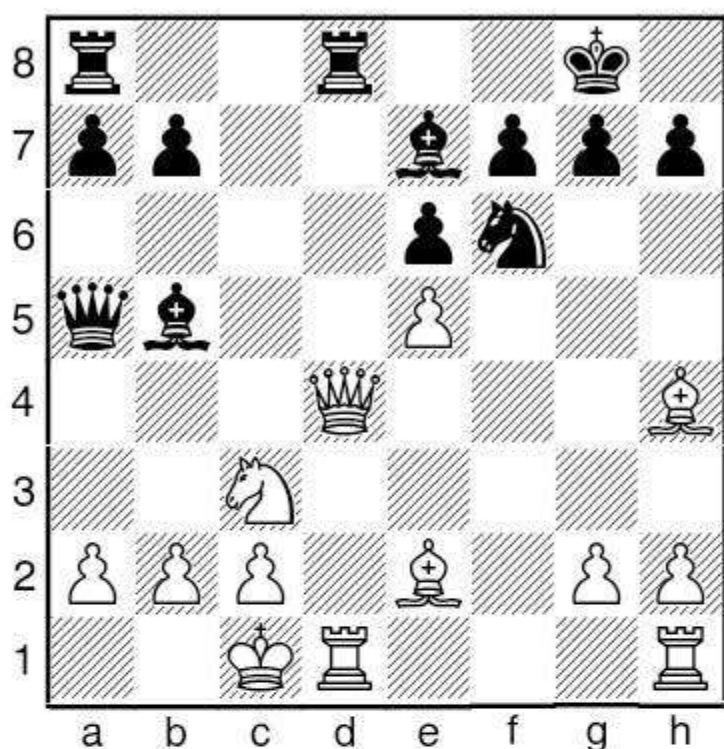
14.♙h4!?

14.♖hf1 ♙b5! 15.♖f4 ♙xe2 16.♖xd8† ♖xd8 17.♘xe2 ♖d5! gives Black decent play.

14.♖e3 actually transposes to a position already covered under 11...♖d8 12.♖e3 ♙d7 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 – see the note to White's 12th move in variation D1 above.

## 14...♙b5

14...♘d5 15.♘xd5 ♙xh4 16.♙xh4 exd5 17.♙d3 h6 18.♙b1± gives White a much nicer version of the transposition mentioned above.



## 15.exf6!

This is the key idea behind my ♙h4 move.

## 15...♖xd4 16.fxe7 ♖xh4

16...♖xd1† 17.♖xd1± with the idea ♖d8†.

16...♙d3!? is an odd move which you are unlikely to ever face. White can just transpose to the main line with 17.♙xd3 ♖xh4 18.♙b5, but White may also play a weird move of his own with 17.g4!?, as proposed by – as if you wouldn't have guessed – the computer.

## 17.♙xb5

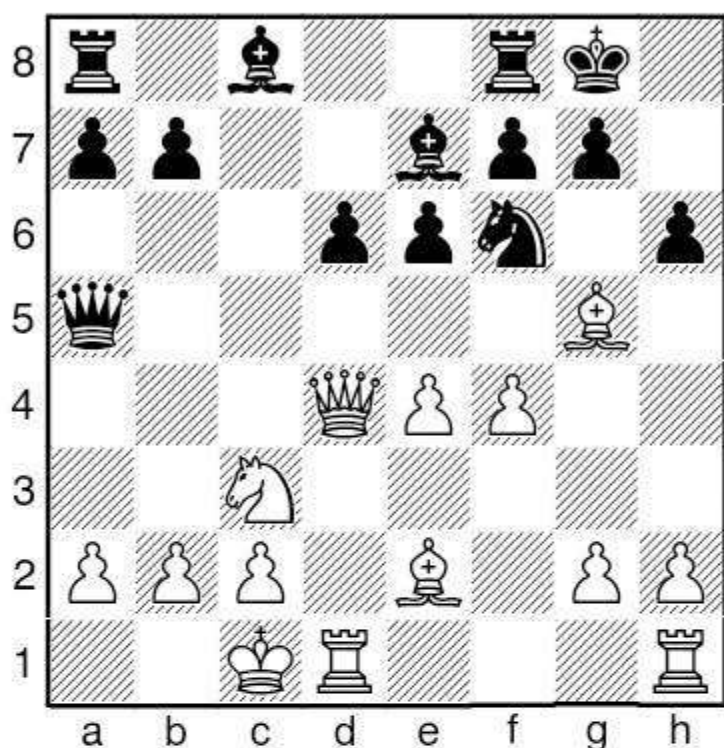
An interesting situation has arisen. White is poised to get a rook and two pieces for the queen, but Black can collect a second extra pawn.

17...♖b4 18.e8=♚† ♖xe8 19.♙xe8 ♔f8 20.a3 ♖g4 21.♙b5 ♖xg2 22.h4±



Positions with this kind of material imbalance are hard to evaluate, but it seems to me that the pawns are of limited value. Moreover, White's pieces should be able to coordinate well, and the black rook is floating around without an anchor.

#### D4) 11...h6



This is a logical and rather critical move, considering that 12.♗h4 e5! 13.♙e3? exf4 would lose material for us. Fortunately we have a much better answer available.

#### 12.h4!

Unless you've been living under a rock in the chess world, you will have seen some version of this idea. Here it's particularly powerful because it is almost impossible for Black to ever take the bishop. Moreover, the prospect of e4-e5 means that Black is under immediate pressure to do something about the bishop on g5.

There are three logical replies: **D41)** 12...d5N, **D42)** 12...e5 and **D43)** 12...♖d8.

12...hxg5 13.hxg5 is, unsurprisingly, unplayable for Black: 13...♘h7 14.♙f2 ♗xg5 15.fxg5 ♙xg5† 16.♔b1+–

## D41) 12...d5N

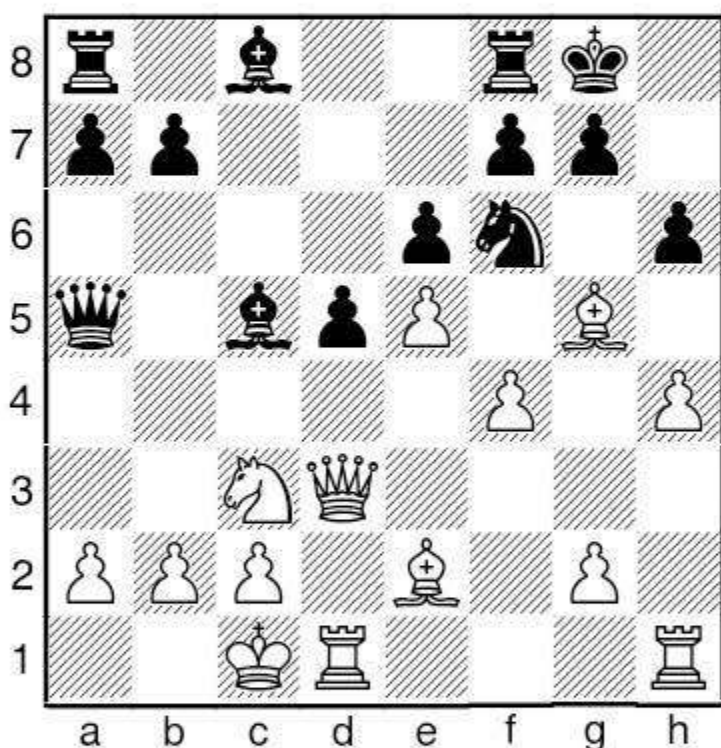
So far nobody has been willing to go for the French structure, but it is worth checking it all the same.

### 13.e5

13.♙xf6? is a bad idea, as after 13...♙xf6 14.e5 ♖e7 15.g4 b5! Black's attack is too fast. 16.g5 can be met by 16...h5!? (16...b4 is also good) when White does not have time to take the h-pawn due to the threat of ...b4.

### 13...♙c5 14.♔d3

The bishop remains impossible to take, and White will prepare a timely f4-f5.



### 14...♘e8!?

The knight stays in contact with the kingside, while leaving the path open for the bishop on c8.

14...♘e4? just loses a pawn: 15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.♔xe4±

14...♘d7 15.♔g3 ♔h8 16.♔b1↑ White is ready for f4-f5.

14...♘h7 15.♔g3 ♔h8 16.♔b1!? Black's kingside can be struck down later. For now, White can afford the time to improve



his pieces. 16...b5 17.♙d3↑

**15.♙g3 ♘h8 16.f5!?**

16.♙b1± is pleasant for White, but on this occasion the direct attack works well.

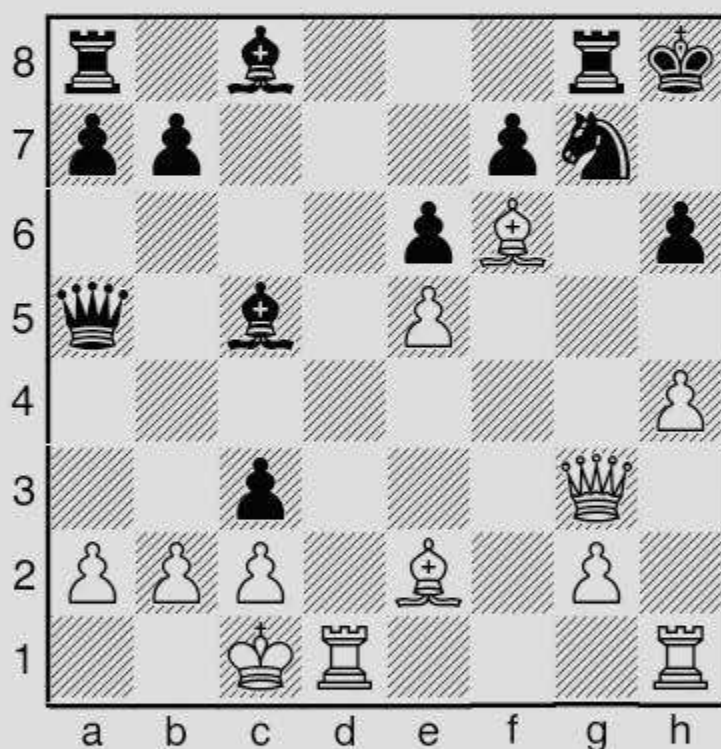
**16...d4**

16...exf5 17.♘xd5 ♙e6 18.♙b3!?!±

**17.f6! dxc3**

Also after 17...gxf6 18.♙xf6† ♘xf6 19.exf6 ♖g8 20.♙f4 ♖g6 21.♘b1!? Black is in trouble.

**18.fxg7† ♘xg7 19.♙f6 ♖g8**



**20.♙d3! ♙b6**

20...♙b4!?! 21.♖df1! is also winning for White – but note that 21.♖de1 b6! allows Black to save himself, since 22.♖e4? ♙xb2† 23.♙d1 ♙b1† 24.♙e2 ♙xh1–+ backfires.

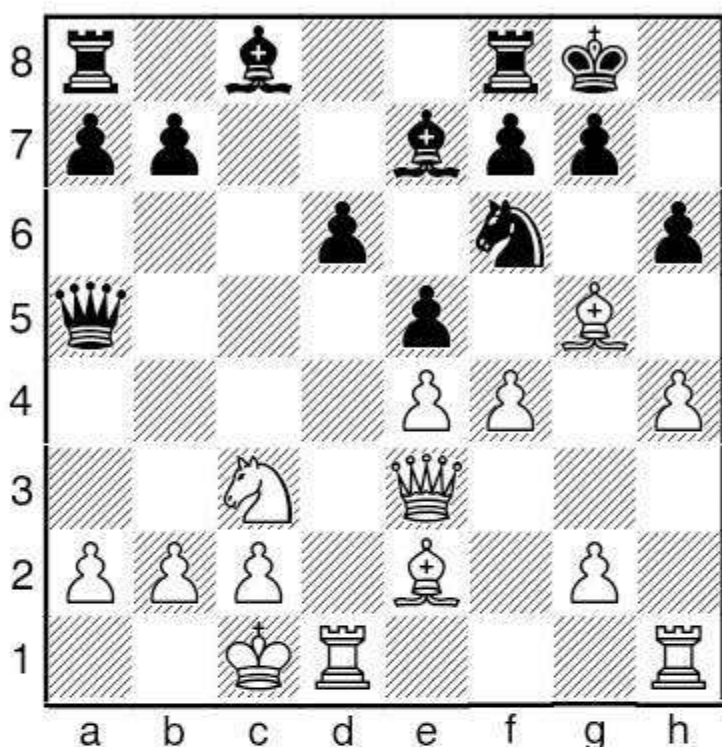
**21.♖de1!**

A beautiful winning line. There is no good defence against ♙f4.

21...♔xb2† 22.♔d1+–

## D42) 12...e5 13.♔e3

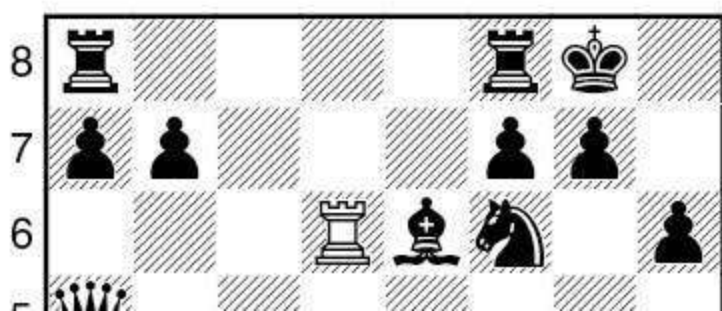
13.♔f2!? has been tried several times and leads to similar play, but I consider e3 to be the normal square in these positions.



## 13...♙e6

13...hxg5? 14.hxg5 exf4 15.♔xf4 ♘h7 16.♘d5! ♙xg5 17.♔xg5! ♘xg5 18.♘e7# is another line showing that taking on g5 is suicidal for Black.

13...exf4 14.♙xf4 gives Black a worse version of the earlier variation D2, as the inclusion of ...h6 and h2-h4 will speed up White's attack. 14...♙e6 (14...♖d8 15.g4→) 15.♙xd6 (15.a3± is decent, but the text move aims to exploit the h6-weakness) 15...♙xd6 16.♖xd6





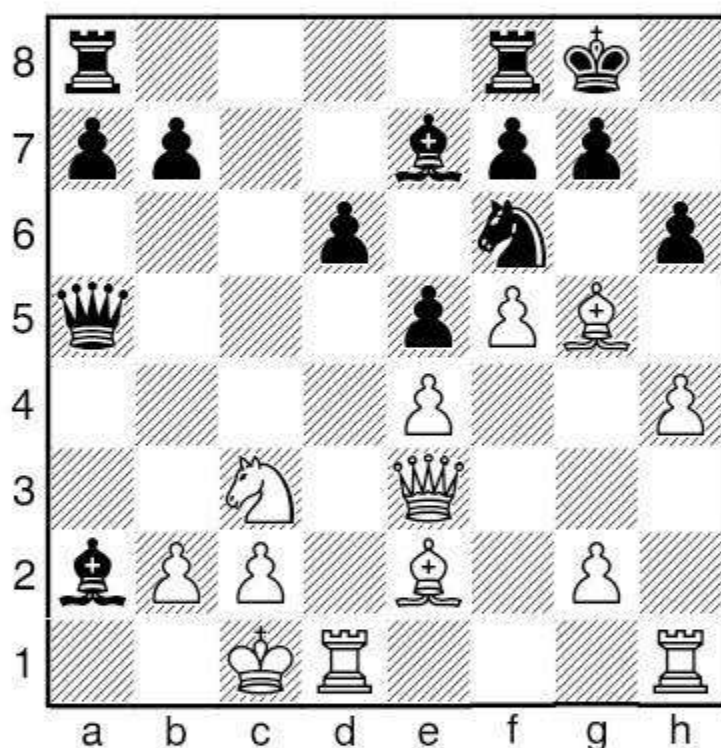
Black is in trouble, as 16...♙xa2? runs into 17.♖xf6! gxf6 18.♔xh6 ♜e6 19.e5!! ♔xe5 20.♘e4! with a winning attack.

The text move is rather provocative, but White must be precise.

## 14.f5!

14.a3 seems the simplest, but now Black has amazing defences after 14...hxc5! 15.f5 (15.hxc5 exf4 16.♔xf4 ♘h7 and ♘d5 isn't possible.) 15...♙xf5! 16.hxc5 (16.exf5 g4 17.h5 ♖fc8 with the idea of ...♖xc3.) 16...♘h7 17.♘d5 ♔xd5!

## 14...♙xa2



## 15.♙xh6!

15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.g4 d5! leads to insane complications.

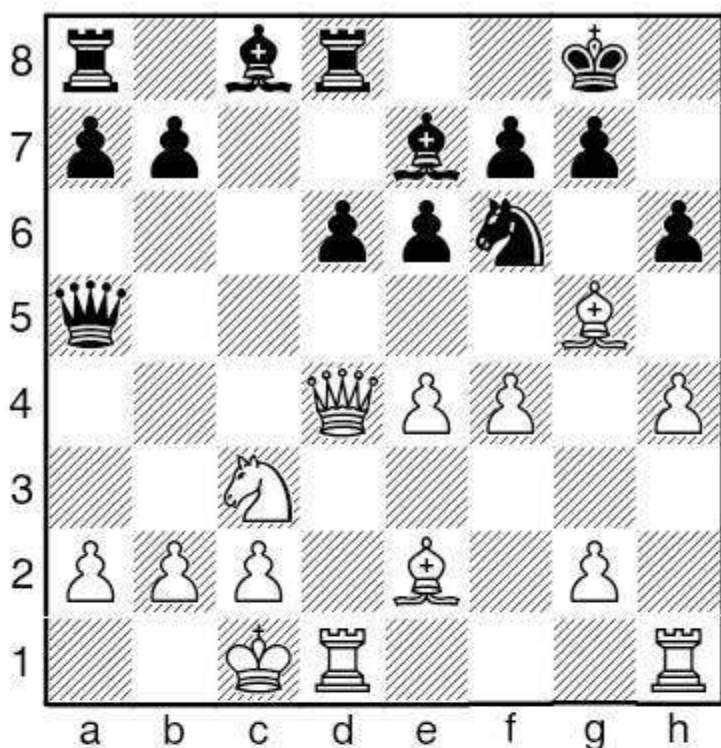
## 15...♖fc8N

15...gxh6? 16.♔xh6 followed by ♖h3 led to a quick defeat for Black in Van Kampen – Gerlich, Utrecht 2012.

## 16.♖h3 ♖xc3 17.♔xc3 ♔xc3 18.♖xc3 gxh6 19.♖a3±

Finally getting that bishop! White thus emerges with an extra exchange in the endgame.

## D43) 12...♖d8



### 13.♙e3

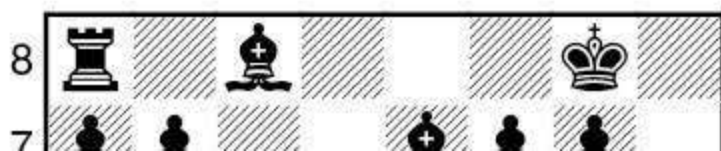
Taking the queen off the d-file is a sensible precaution. Black now has to worry about e4-e5, as well as ♙g3. The analogous position where White has played ♙b1 instead of ♙e2 has occurred in lots of games. Although the prophylactic king move can often be important, I believe the bishop move is more useful here; for example, having the rooks connected adds strength to the e4-e5 advance.

### 13...♙d7

13...b5 14.e5! dxe5 15.fxe5 ♖xd1† 16.♖xd1 This move seems simplest. 16...hxg5 17.exf6 ♙xf6 18.♙f3 ♖b8 19.♘e4 ♙e7 20.♘xg5 ♙xg5† 21.hxg5±

13...♙f8 doesn't really threaten ...hxg5, so White can continue 14.♙g3 with the point that 14...hxg5 15.hxg5 ♘g8 16.♖h8 gives White a decisive attack.

13...d5 14.e5 d4 15.♖xd4 ♖xd4

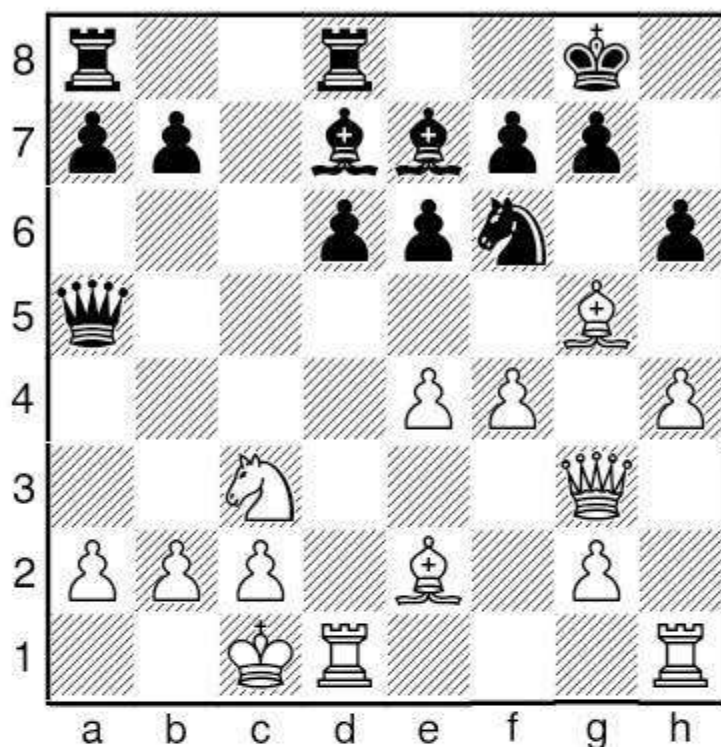




16.exf6! ♖c5 17.♔g3 ♔d8 17...hxg5 18.hxg5→ creates a pretty picture!) 18.fxg7 hxg5 19.hxg5 The black king is in trouble.

## 14.♔g3

14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘d5! 17.♘xd5 exd5 is messy.



## 14...♔f8

14...♖ac8 15.♗xh6 ♘e8 16.♗xg7 ♘xg7 17.h5 ♗f6 18.h6 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 ♔xc3 20.♗d3→

14...♔h8 15.e5! dxe5 16.fxe5 ♘g8 17.♔b1! (after 17.♗d3 ♖ac8! Black would be threatening ...♖xc3) With the a2-pawn now defended, White's knight will be free to go to e4.



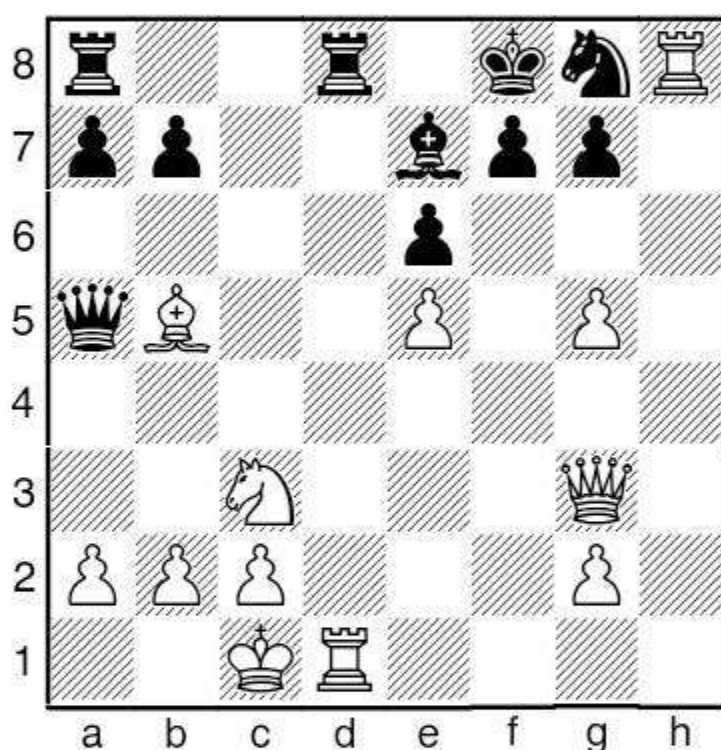
17...♙e8 (both 17...♖ac8 18.♘e4 and 17...♙c6 18.♙d3 are also promising for White) 18.♘e4 ♖xd1† 19.♖xd1 ♖d8 20.♙d3±

**15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 hxg5 17.hxg5 ♘g8 18.♖df1!**

The power of modern engines – White just calmly continues the attack, while avoiding any tricks.

18.g6 f5! is nothing for White.

18.♖h8 was my original intention, but then Black has the most amazing defence after: 18...♙b5!! 19.♙xb5 (19.♘xb5 ♖xd1† 20.♙xd1 ♖d8† 21.♘d6 is also unclear)



19...♙xc3!! Wow! The game can still go on, but it's pretty unclear.

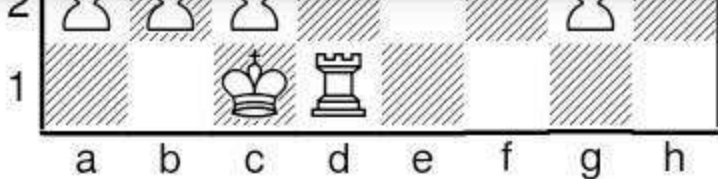
**18...♙e8 19.g6 f5**

After 19...f6 20.♖h8! Black resigned in Van den Bos – Wagner, corr. 2007. After, for example, 20...♖ac8 21.♖fh1! there is no good defence against 22.♖xg8† ♙xg8 23.♖h8† ♙xh8 24.♙h3† ♙g8 25.♙h7† ♙f8 26.♙h8#.

**20.♙c4! ♙d7 21.♖xf5†! exf5 22.♖h8**

The attack has crashed through and White is winning.





19...♔xc3!! Wow! The game can still go on, but it's pretty unclear.

**18...♙e8 19.g6 f5**

After 19...f6 20.♖h8! Black resigned in Van den Bos – Wagner, corr. 2007. After, for example, 20...♖ac8 21.♖fh1! there is no good defence against 22.♖xg8† ♔xg8 23.♖h8† ♔xh8 24.♗h3† ♔g8 25.♗h7† ♔f8 26.♗h8#.

**20.♙c4! ♙d7 21.♖xf5†! exf5 22.♖h8**

The attack has crashed through and White is winning.

## Conclusion

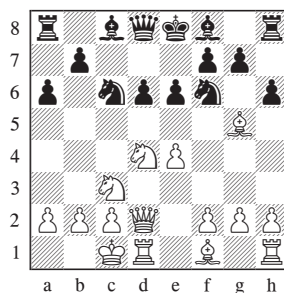
We have covered a great variety of position types in this chapter, from sacrificial attacks to squeezing a positional plus. It is interesting how a small change in the position, such as the timing of a move like ...h6 (if Black plays it at all), can necessitate a slightly different approach from a similar-looking variation.

Of the variations examined, line C2 with 10...e5 11.♘f5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 stands out as requiring a good deal of accuracy from us, especially after the slightly unusual 12...♔a5!?

The biggest theoretical subject of the chapter is 9...♘xd4 10.♔xd4 ♔a5, when my recommendation of 11.♙e2!? is an ideal weapon: an objectively strong move, which has been strangely neglected by most players and theoreticians. Then 11...♙d7 allows White to initiate a tactical sequence winning several pieces for a queen, while 11...h6 12.h4! also leads to dangerous play for Black with no clear route to equality in sight.

# Chapter 15

## Rauzer



7...a6 8.0-0 h6

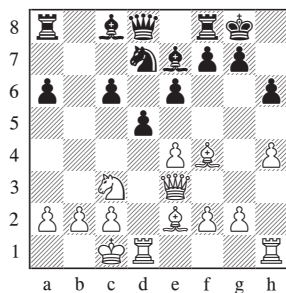
### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♕g5 e6  
7.♖d2 a6 8.0-0 h6 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♕f4 d5

11.♖e3

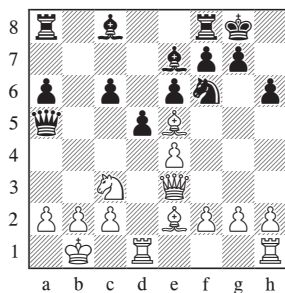
A) 11...♕e7	226
B) 11...♖a5	229
C) 11...♕b4!?	231

A) after 13...♗d7



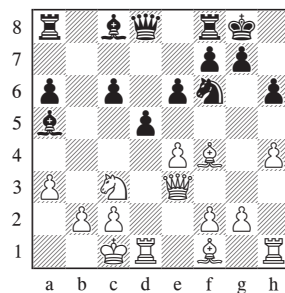
14.♕b1!N

B) after 14...0-0



15.exd5!N

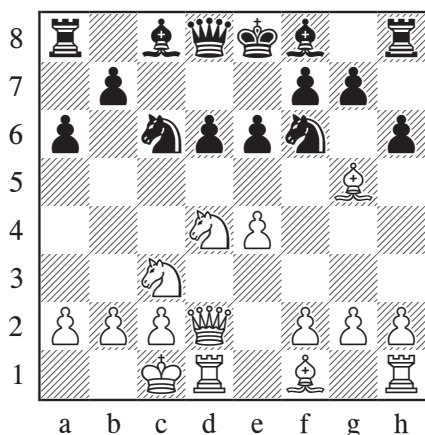
C) after 13...0-0



14.f3!N



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6  
5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6



This used to be an extremely popular set-up. It has been used in thousands of games, but at some point Black began to face serious problems against ♘xc6 and ♙f4. For a while it dropped out of popularity, but it has undergone a resurgence of late, as White has failed to show an advantage in some key games.

9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.♙f4 d5 11.♚e3

Strengthening Black's centre and opening the b-file should not be taken lightly, but I am confident that White can more than make up for these factors with his piece activity and attacking potential.

Black's three main continuations are A) 11...♙e7, B) 11...♚a5 and C) 11...♙b4.

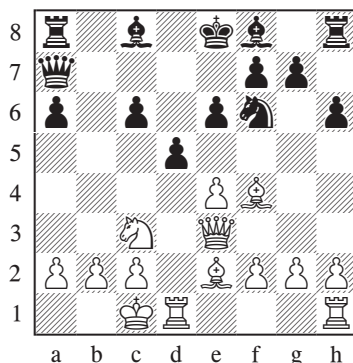
11...♚a7?!

This has been played three times by Chernyshov, and a few other strong players have dabbled with it. The surprising idea is to put the queen on a7, when the white queen might have trouble finding a good square – but actually it's not all that hard to solve this problem.

12.♙e2

Covering the h5-square.

12...♚a7



13.♚g3! d4N

This is the only real chance to justify Black's play.

13...♙d7 14.♙e5 h5 15.♚he1± Ristic – Ivanovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1999.

14.e5! ♘d5 15.♘e4 ♚b8 16.♘b1

White has a fine position, for instance:

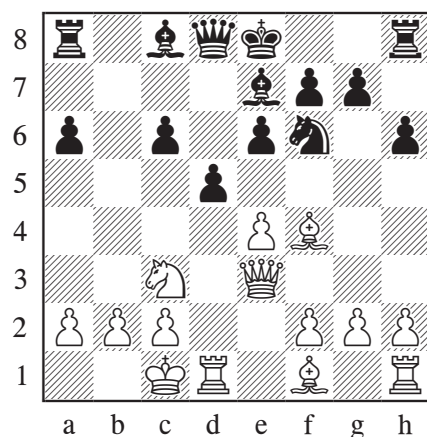
16...♘xf4

Otherwise the bishop can drop neatly back to c1.

17.♚xf4 ♙e7 18.h4±

Intending to activate the rook via h3.

A) 11...♙e7



This is a natural move, but it has almost completely dropped out of popularity these days. Black does not put White under any

pressure, and if he castles he only invites a rapid kingside attack with g2-g4 and so on. Still, a certain degree of accuracy is required to make the most of White's chances.

### 12.♔e2 0–0

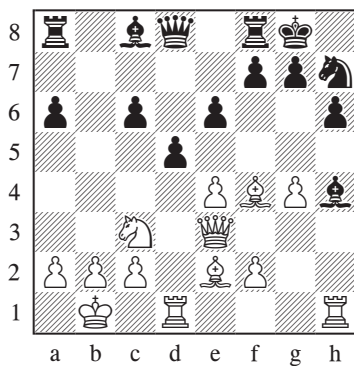
12...♘d7 13.h4 ♖b6? (Black should really settle for 13...0–0 with a transposition to the main line) 14.♖g3± was unpleasant for Black in Khalifman – Xu Jun, Shanghai 2001.

### 13.h4 ♘d7

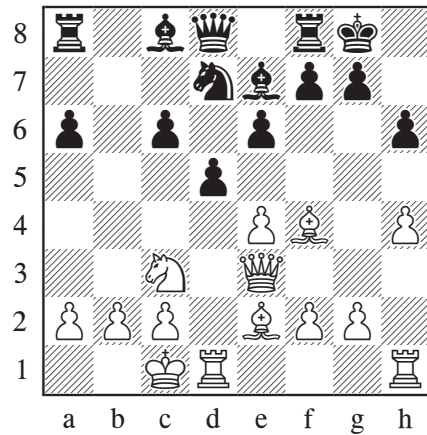
By threatening ...e5, Black manages to prevent an instant g4-g5. However, the availability of attacking ideas such as ♕xh6 makes the position rather scary to play for Black.

13...♖e8 14.g4 ♘d7 15.♖g3 e5 16.♔d2 d4 (16...♘c5 17.g5→) 17.♘a4± White was ready for g4-g5 in Scheider – Malcher, Germany 2014.

13...♘h7 14.g4! ♕xh4 15.♔b1 is extremely risky for Black. One game continued:



15...♕xg5 16.♕xg5 ♖xg5 17.f4 ♖e7 18.g5 White was already winning in Edouard – Raetsky, Al Ain 2012.



### 14.♔b1!±N

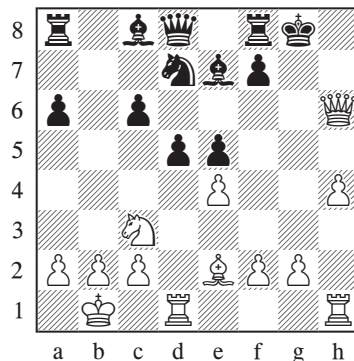
It is too early for 14.g4?, as 14...e5 wins material.

I also considered 14.exd5 exd5 15.♕xh6N gxf6 16.♖xh6, but after 16...♘e5! Black should be able to defend successfully.

The most important thing to realize here is that ...e5 is not actually a threat because of ♕xh6, as shown in the next note. Therefore we can make a useful improving move while waiting to see what Black intends to do.

### 14...♖b6

14...e5 15.♕xh6! gxf6 16.♖xh6 is dangerous:





16...♙f6 Black defends against an immediate mate, but after 17.exd5 ♙g7 18.♖e3 White has three pawns for a piece, along with the easy plan of advancing his pawns on the kingside.

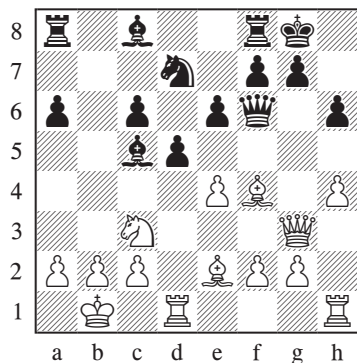
14...♙b4 15.♘a4 e5 16.♙g5! is another nice detail. 16...♘f6 17.♙xf6 ♖xf6 18.♘b6±

14...♙c5

This is an obvious move to consider, but rather a provocative one.

15.♖g3 ♖f6

15...♘h8 16.♘a4 ♙e7 (16...♙a7 17.♖c3!±) 17.♙c7 ♖e8 18.♖h2± looks dreadfully passive for Black.



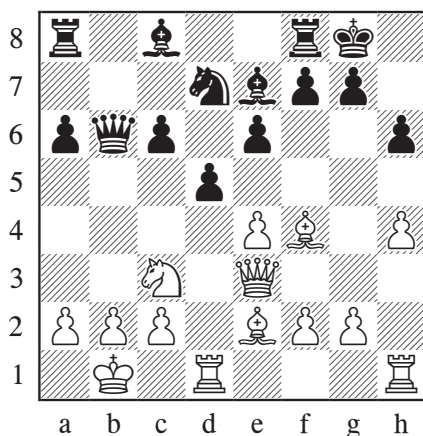
16.e5!

16.f3!? followed by ♙g5 is another possibility, but the text move reduces Black's options.

16...♖g6 17.♖h3!

17.♙g5 f6 18.exf6 ♘xf6 19.♙d3 ♖f7 20.♙xh6 ♘h5 leads to messy complications. The text move is much easier, as Black's queen is left in a bad place. Black will probably have to play ...f5, allowing us to prepare g2-g4 at our convenience.

Exchanging queens seems to be a reasonable idea for Black, but White can continue pressing on the kingside regardless.



15.g4!?

Your choice really depends on how comfortable you are with the exchange sacrifice that this move necessitates.

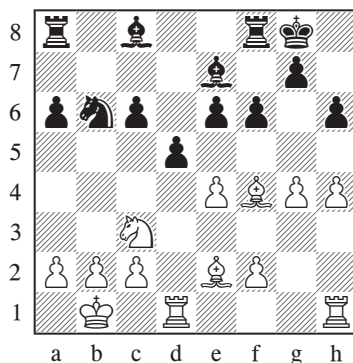
15.♖xb6 ♘xb6 16.g4

This resembles the next note, but Black has a slightly better version with his knight on b6. At the same time, White still seems to have a smooth game.

16...f6!

Black needs to prevent g4-g5. Now things slow down a bit.

16...♙b4 can be ignored: 17.g5! ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♘a4 19.♙d3 ♖e8 20.e5±



17.♙e3 ♖b8 18.b3

Intending f2-f4, and the game goes on. It's hard to say if White is really better, but he certainly has a lot of possibilities on the

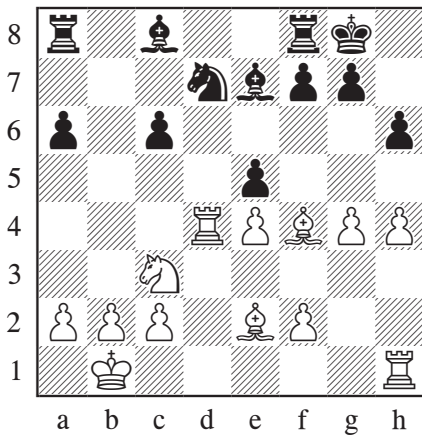
kingside. Black cannot do anything with his fancy pawn centre for now, and the fact that his rook has gone to b8 means he does not have the typical plan of ...a5 and ...♙a6 available.

### 15...d4

This is the critical test of White's last move, but I am happy with how things turn out.

15...♙xe3 16.♙xe3 gives White an improved version of the previous note. He has a serious threat of g4-g5 and transferring the d1-rook to the kingside, while Black does not have much counterplay in sight. 16...f6 is necessary once again, but after 17.f4 ♙c5 18.♖h3 ♙xe3 19.♙xe3± White keeps a nice edge.

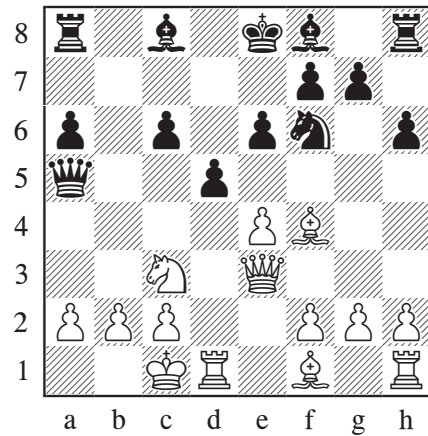
### 16.♙xd4 ♙xd4 17.♖xd4 e5



### 18.♖xd7 ♙xd7 19.♙xe5 ♖fe8 20.f3

Having two pawns for the exchange is not always a big deal in itself, but one must also take into account Black's weak pawn structure. White's knight also has good prospects, with ♖a4 and perhaps ♖b2-c4 being attractive possibilities for later in the game. Victory will not come easily, but White can press with little risk.

### B) 11...♙a5

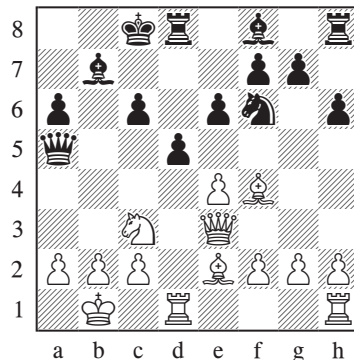


This is a bit more active, but White is well placed to deal with it.

### 12.♙e2 ♙b4

This seems like the logical follow-up.

12...♙b7 is an unusual and rather dubious idea. 13.♙b1 0–0–0 I once lost to Chernyshov from this position, but it was mostly just because I was a kid.



14.♙g3!? looks like a good move, for instance: 14...♙c5 (14...♖d7 15.♙f4±) 15.♙f4 ♙d6 16.e5±

### 12...dxe4

This has been played quite a few times, but it carries obvious risks.

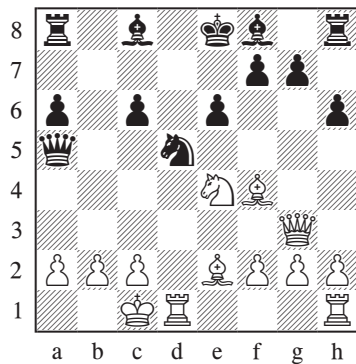


13. ♖xe4

Simplest, although 13. ♖c4!? is also tempting.

13... ♖d5 14. ♖g3!

14. ♖xd5 cxd5 15. ♖d6† is mentioned as unnecessarily speculative by Wells, but White does not have to resort to this.



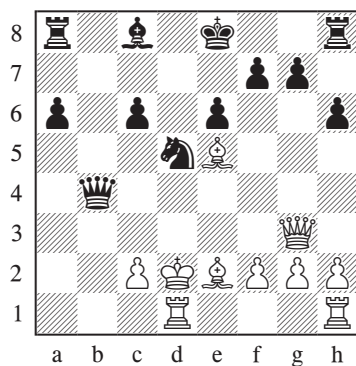
14... ♖xa2 15. ♖d6† ♖xd6 16. ♖xd6

White has excellent compensation and his king is in less danger than it may appear to be.

16... ♖a1† 17. ♖d2 ♖xb2

17... ♖a5† 18. b4±

18. ♖e5 ♖b4†

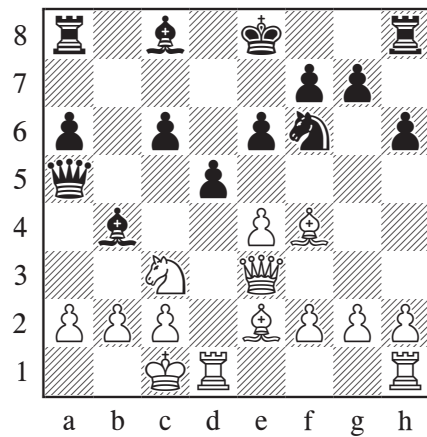


19. ♖c1! N

19.c3 has scored heavily for White, but to me it seems more natural to leave the pawn at home and keep the king safer.

19... ♖g8 20. ♖d2†

It is hard to suggest a defence against White's plan of c2-c4 and ♖hd1.



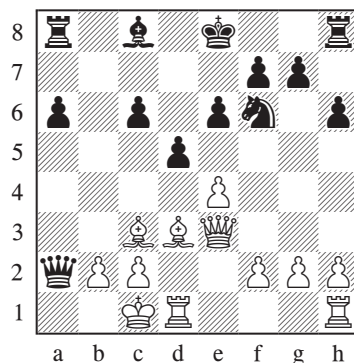
13. ♖e5!

This is a typical resource to contain Black's counterplay.

13... ♖e7

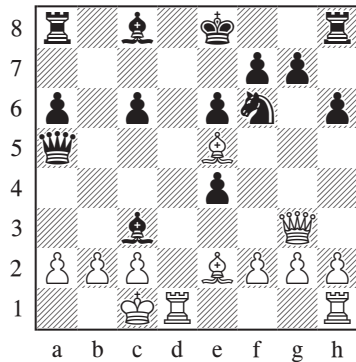
This manoeuvre looks odd to me but it has done alright in practice, so it is worth checking it a bit more deeply.

After 13... ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3 ♖xa2 15. ♖d3→ the mighty dark-squared bishop more than makes up for the missing pawn, and White has amassed a terrific score. Detailed analysis is not necessary, but I will mention one important point:

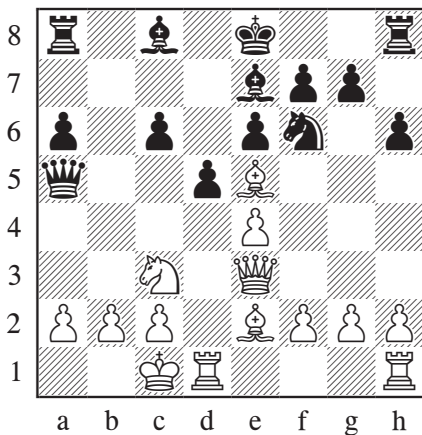


15... dxe4 should be met by 16. ♖g3! (16. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 17. ♖xe4 0-0 is not so bad for Black) 16... exd3 17. ♖xg7 ♖g8 18. ♖xf6 with a vicious attack on the dark squares.

13...dxe4 14.♖g3! ♙xc3 (14...♙b7 15.♙b1N ♙e7 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♘xe4 ♖e5 18.♖g7 ♜f8 19.♙f3±; 14...♙e7 also doesn't help much, and 15.♙b1!N leaves Black completely tied down)



15.♙c7! ♙xb2† 16.♙xb2 ♖b4† 17.♙a1 ♘d5 (17...♙d7 18.♙e5±) 18.♖xg7 ♖f8 19.♖d4± Ponomarev – Bu Xiangzhi, Lausanne 2001.



14.♙b1 0–0 15.exd5!N

15.♖g3 has been played, but clarifying the central structure works well.

15...cxd5

15...exd5 16.g4! ♙c5 (16...♘d7 17.♙xg7) 17.♖g3 gives White good attacking prospects.

16.♙d4!

Preventing Black's idea of ...♙c5 and ...♘d7.

Now White is ready to start rolling with his pawns.

16...♙b8

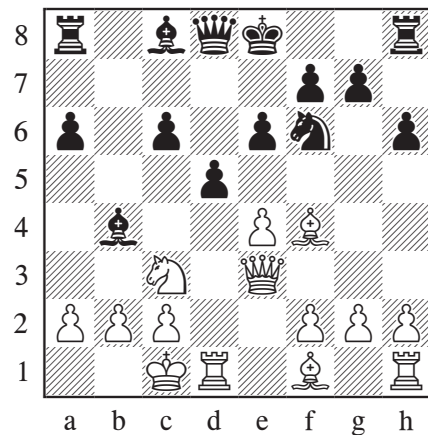
16...♘d7? allows 17.♘xd5!.

16...♖c7 17.f4± does not really help Black.

17.h4↑

White is ready to meet ...♙a3 with b2-b3, but it is not so easy for Black to deal with the kingside threats.

C) 11...♙b4!?



This is the most critical move, which has done well for Black in some recent games.

12.a3

12.♙e2 0–0 13.e5 has been played in a lot of games but I was not entirely happy after 13...♘h7!, when ...♖a5 is an annoying threat.

12...♙a5

12...♙xc3 13.♖xc3 ♘xe4 14.♖xg7 ♖f6 15.♖xf6 ♘xf6 16.♙e5 ♙e7 17.g4 favours White, as Wells points out. If Black is thinking of trading his dark-squared bishop for a knight in these lines, then he generally needs to get something big in return.



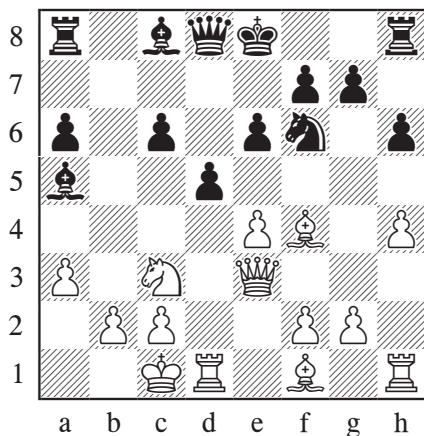
**13.h4**

13.♔e2 0–0 14.e5 ♘d7 15.♖g3 is a popular continuation which was recommended by Wells, but after 15...♙h8!? (improving over 15...♙c7) 16.♖h3 ♙g8 White has not been able to prove anything.

13.exd5 cxd5 14.♔e2 0–0 15.♖g3 (15.g4 ♖e8 16.g5 ♙xc3 is good for Black) 15...♙xc3 16.♖xc3 ♙d7! has also proven fully reliable for Black in several games.

13.f3!?N is similar to the main line and may transpose after a subsequent h2-h4, but it seems more natural to postpone this idea for another move.

13.g4!? is a rare but interesting move. I spent some time analysing 13...♙xg4 (13...♖b6 14.♖g3↑) 14.♖g3 ♙f6 15.♔e2!N, eventually concluding that White is doing well. However, Black has a better defence in 13...0–0!N, when I could not find any advantage, although the position is certainly interesting to analyse.

**13...0–0 14.f3!N**

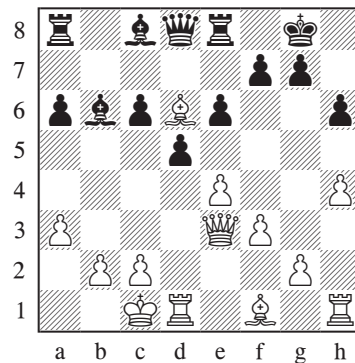
This is my new idea. White safeguards his central pawn and prepares to launch an attack.

14.♔e2?! allows 14...♙xc3 when Black grabs a pawn under pretty safe conditions.

14.e5 ♘d7 has been played a few times, but White has not achieved any advantage.

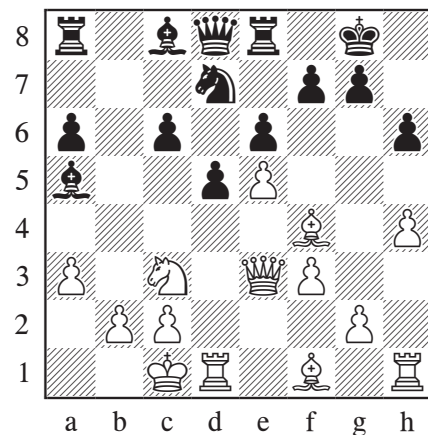
**14...♖e8**

14...♘d7 can be met by: 15.♙d6!? ♖e8 16.♙a4 ♘b6 (16...♙b7 17.g4 ♙c7 18.♙xc7 ♖xc7 19.g5 h5 20.g6!↑) 17.♙xb6 ♙xb6

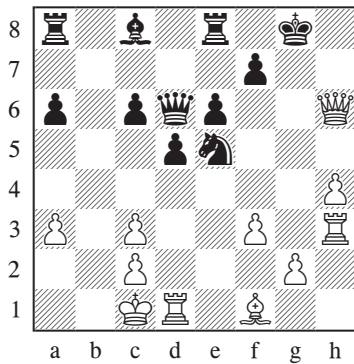


18.♖f4!? ♙e3† (18...♖f6 19.♖xf6 gxf6 20.b3±) 19.♖xe3 ♖xd6 20.f4!↑ Intending g2-g4 with a kingside initiative. (20.g4 is also playable although 20...e5 seems okay for Black.)

The computer insists that the text move is best, but it meets with a spectacular refutation.

**15.e5 ♘d7****16.♙xh6! ♖c7**

16...gxh6 17.♖xh6 ♕xc3 18.bxc3 ♜xe5  
19.♞h3 ♞d6 (19...♞a7 20.♕d3 f5 21.♞g3†+–)

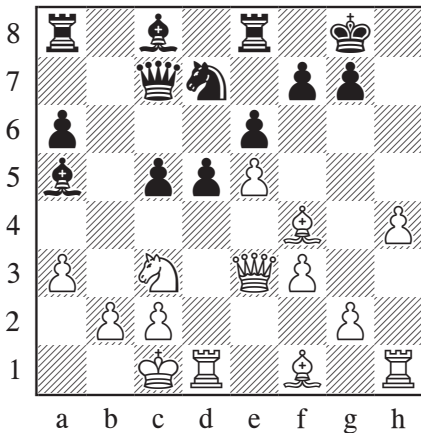


20.♕d4! ♜g6 21.h5 ♞xa3† 22.♔d2 ♞f8  
23.hxg6 ♞xh6† 24.♞xh6 fxc6 25.♕d3 Despite  
the queen exchange, Black will have to remain  
on the defensive.

### 17.♕f4

17.♕xg7 ♜xg7 18.♞g5† ♜f8 19.♞h6† ♜e7  
20.♞g5† is just a draw.

### 17...c5



### 18.h5! d4 19.♞e1 dxc3 20.b3!

It is hard for Black to withstand the slow  
attack.

### 20...f6

20...♕b7 21.♕d6! maintains strong pressure.

### 21.h6 g5

21...♜xe5 also fails to solve Black's problems:  
22.hxg7 ♞xg7 23.♕xe5 fxe5 24.♞h4 ♕d8  
25.♞g4 ♕g5† 26.♔b1 ♜f7 27.g3!±

### 22.♞h5!

22.♕xg5 fxc6 23.♞e4 ♞xe5 24.♞g6† ♜f8∞  
leaves us without a clear way through.

### 22...♜f8

22...gxf4 23.♞h4! ♜xe5? 24.♞xf6 wins.

### 23.♕xg5 ♞f7 24.♞h4 fxc6 25.♞xg5† ♜h8 26.♞g4±

Black has avoided a forced loss, but White  
still has a huge attack.

## Conclusion

The system with 7...a6 and 8...h6 is quite an  
ambitious one, as the critical continuation  
of 9.♜xc6 bxc6 10.♕f4 d5 sees Black build a  
proud pawn centre. On the other hand, after  
11.♞e3, White's fluid piece play gives Black  
plenty to think about – especially keeping  
in mind that the ...h6 move will make short  
castling a risky endeavour for him.

11...♕e7 is an unpretentious continuation.  
Black's position is solid enough to withstand a  
direct assault, but my new idea of 14.♔b1!N  
makes it quite hard for him to find a good plan.

11...♞a5 followed by ...♕b4 is more active,  
but White does well by posting his bishop  
on e5. Exchanging on c3 is almost always too  
risky, for Black, as the a2-pawn is not worth  
the surrender of his dark squares.

Finally, 11...♕b4!? is a tricky option, but  
I found another interesting new idea in  
14.f3!N. This keeps the centre under control,  
and prepares to shine the spotlight on Black's  
kingside which was weakened by ...h6.



# Chapter 16

## Rauzer



8...♖e7

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6  
6.♕g5 e6 7.♖d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♕e7 9.f4 ♗xd4  
10.♖xd4

A) 10...0-0!?

B) 10...b5 11.♕xf6 gxf6 12.e5 d5 13.♕e2!?

B1) 13...♕b7

B2) 13...♖g8

B3) 13...♖b8

note to 9...♗xd4



12.♗xf6!N

B2) after 14...f5



15.g4!N

B3) after 15...exf5!?



16.g4!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♕g5 e6  
7.♖d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♕e7

Black could change the move order with 8...♗xd4 9.♗xd4 ♕e7, but it makes no difference against the set-up we are using.



## 9.f4

This move introduces a positional threat of  $\text{♞xc6}$  followed by e4-e5 (White might also change the order of these two moves), which virtually guarantees an advantage if White gets a chance to play it. Therefore we will focus on the main lines where Black avoids it.

## 9...♞xd4

9...♞d7 leads straight to variation B of the next chapter.

In quite a few games Black has tried:

## 9...♔c7

I'm not sure of the purpose behind this particular mix of moves.

## 10.♔b1

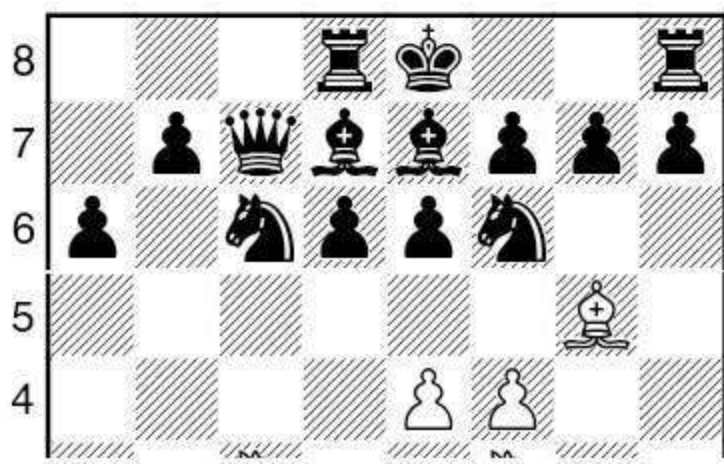
White gets a good position with normal moves. He could also consider taking on f6 but, since Black's idea isn't clear, I don't see the need to hurry with that.

I also considered 10.♞e2 ♞d7 11.♞b3, but after 11...b5 12.♞xf6 gxf6 13.♞h5 b4 14.♞e2 a5 15.♞bd4 ♞xd4 16.♞xd4 0-0 Black's position seems decent enough.

## 10...♞d7 11.♞f3 ♞d8

11...b5? 12.e5± is no good for Black.

11...0-0-0 12.♞d3± leaves Black passively placed, and queenside castling doesn't help him much. White can improve his position with normal development, and eventually the dark-squared bishop will be excellent on f2.





12. ♖xf6!N

It's a good time to make this trade.

12... ♖xf6

After 12...gxf6 13.f5± the rook on d8 looks out of place, and Black can no longer evacuate his king to the queenside.

13. ♔xd6 ♔xd6 14. ♖xd6 ♖xc3 15. bxc3±

Black does not have full compensation and he faces an unpleasant defence.

10. ♔xd4

We will consider **A) 10...0-0!?** and **B) 10...b5**.

### **A) 10...0-0!?**

White has to be quite precise to deal with this.

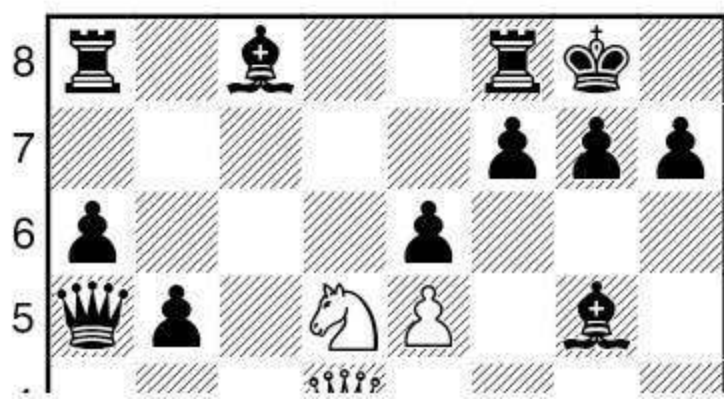
11. ♔b1!

Black's idea is that 11. ♖xf6 can be met by 11... ♖xf6! 12. ♔xd6 ♔a5 13.e5 ♖d8 with decent compensation, as in Sikula – Lagarde, Saint Affrique 2008.

11. ♖e2 is a natural move, but then 11...b5 transposes into the 10...b5 11. ♖e2 line – which is interesting, but not what I have in mind.

11...b5

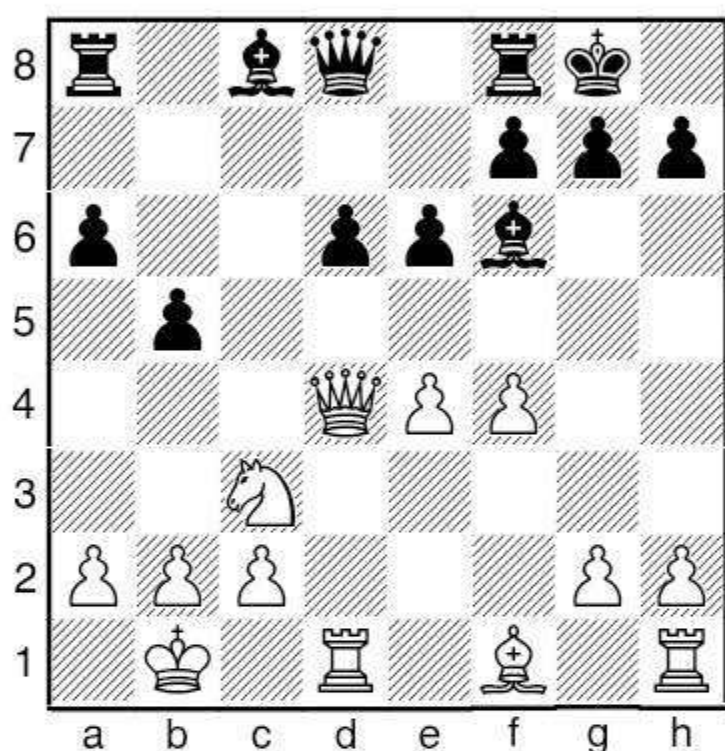
After 11... ♔a5 12. ♖e2 it is not clear how Black will develop. 12...b5 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♖d5 15. ♖xd5 ♖xg5 occurred in Arabidze – Gvetadze, Batumi 2003, when White could have got a deadly attack with:



16.h4!N 16...♖d8 (16...exd5 17.hxg5+–) 17.♘f6†! gxf6 18.exf6 ♔h8 19.♙d3+–

## 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6

12...gxf6N 13.♙d3± gives White a nice version of this structure. With Black's king committed to the kingside, White has an easy plan of transferring his major pieces to the kingside, and possibly the knight via e2 and g3, before breaking through at the appropriate moment.



## 13.e5!

13.♙xd6 is less convincing due to 13...♙b7 14.e5 ♙e7= when Black's bishops are strong.

## 13...dxe5

13...♙e7N 14.exd6 ♙f6 15.♙e3 does not give Black quite enough compensation for the pawn.

## 14.♙e4 ♙b6 15.♙xa8 ♙b7 16.♙d6!

A crucial detail.

Instead after 16.♙xf8†? ♔xf8+ Black's bishops are too powerful.



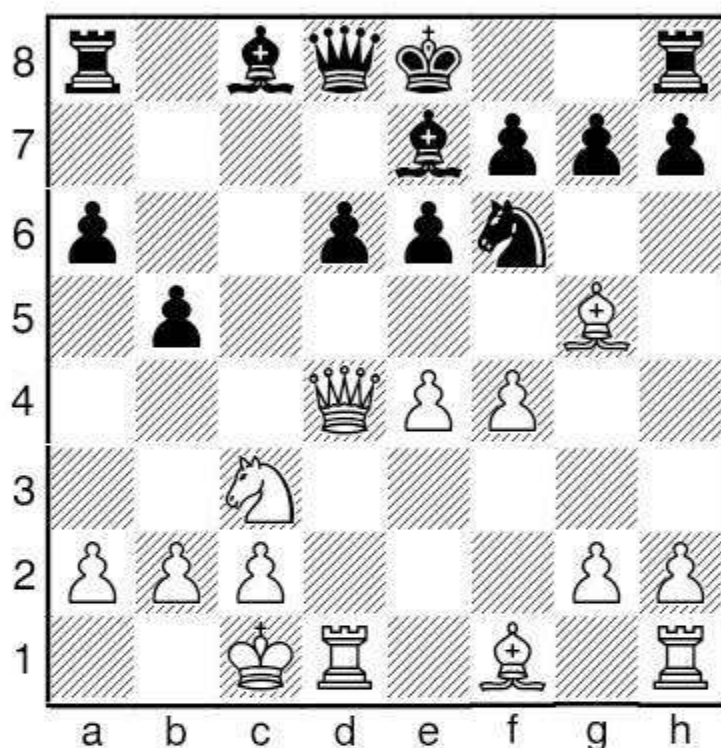
16...♔c7 17.♔a7 ♔xd6 18.♔xb7 b4 19.♘e2 exf4 20.♔e4

20.♘c1 ♔e5 21.♘d3 ♔d8!? gave Black some compensation, although White was still better in Montheard – Shengelia, Cappelle la Grande 2005.

20...♔d8 21.♘c1±

Wells – Kiss, Hungary 1996.

## B) 10...b5



This dynamic system became hugely popular in the late 90s and 2000s, with theory developing in many different directions. Naturally I will focus on the one I consider the most challenging for Black.

11.♙xf6 gxf6

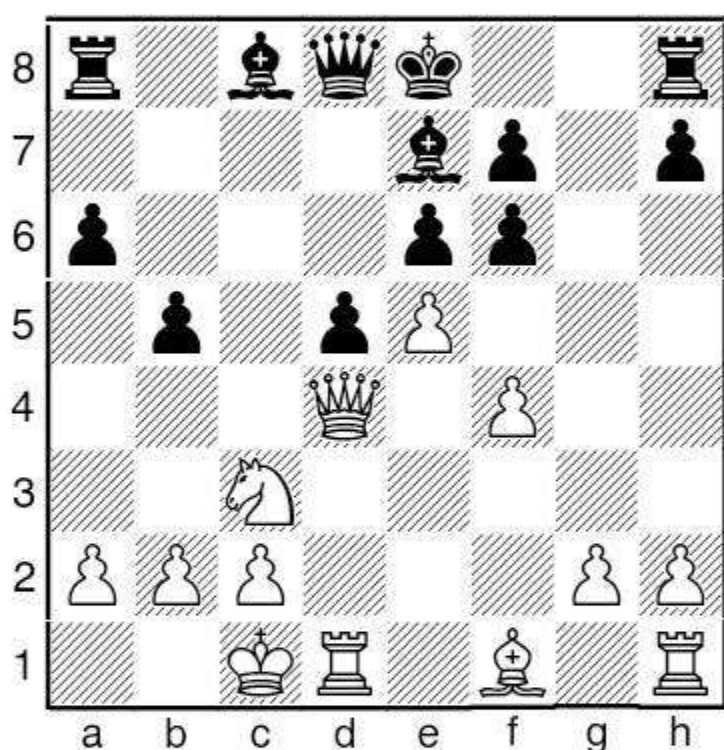
We get our typical structure again, but there are some differences compared to other versions. Black has not wasted any time, and his queenside pawns are already mobile. He also enjoys some extra flexibility as the c8-bishop can go to either d7 or b7. At the same time, Black is currently behind in development, which explains White's next move.

## 12.e5

This is not a typical move in this structure, but in this particular variation it is the critical try to exploit White's development advantage.

12.f5 ♔c7 13.fxe6 fxe6 is another logical continuation, but after 14.♘e2 (14.♔d2 ♔c5 15.♙b1 ♘d7 16.♘d3 b4 17.♘e2 a5 and Black's queenside counterplay will be too fast) 14...♔c5 15.♔xc5 dxc5 16.♘h5† ♙f8 I was unable to find anything special for White.

## 12...d5



Blocking the centre is pretty much forced, and now we reach a critical moment. White has the attacking idea of f4-f5 in the air, but it's not so easy to make it work. Looking from Black's side, so far ...b4 isn't really possible because of the nice trick with ♘e4!, but it could become a threat later. Black's ideas include the annoying ...♖b8 followed by ...♔b6, or perhaps just trying to arrange long castling.

Having played around with different ideas, what I would like to do is provoke Black into playing ...f5, whether due to pressure along the e-file or threatening to play f4-f5. Once the pawn appears on f5, we will have a chance to



undermine Black's structure with g2-g4 and possibly the sacrifice h2-h3. Somehow I'm always attracted to that idea – perhaps it's just the aesthetics of it. So how do we continue improving our position, bearing in mind the above plan?

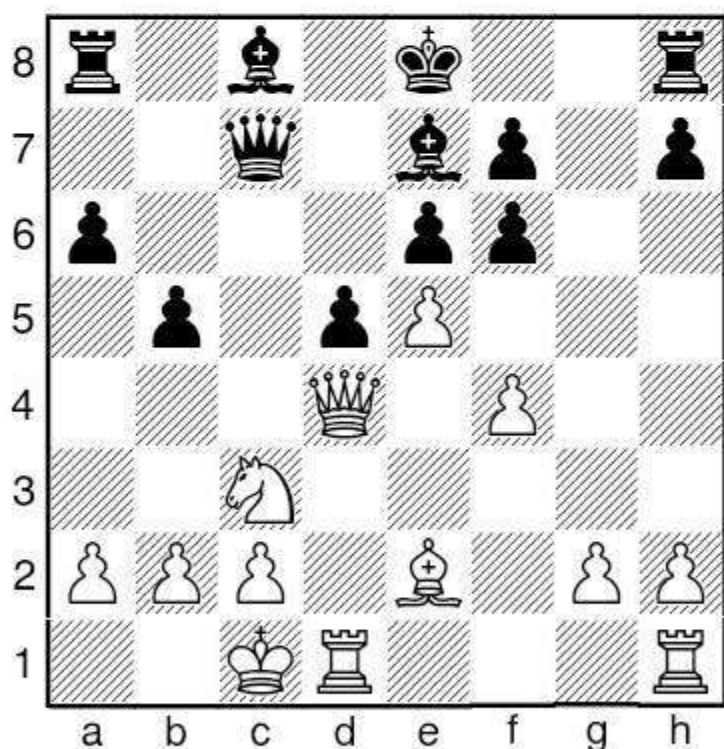
### 13. ♖e2!

I tried many other ideas such as 13. ♔b1, 13. ♙d3 and 13. ♜e1, but eventually I realized the best thing is just to develop another piece. Another important point is that ♙h5 can be really annoying for Black in some lines.

Black's three main replies are **B1)** 13... ♙b7, **B2)** 13... ♜g8 and **B3)** 13... ♜b8.

13... fxe5? has never been played, and after 14. fxe5 the opening of the f-file clearly favours White, who was planning ♙h5 anyway.

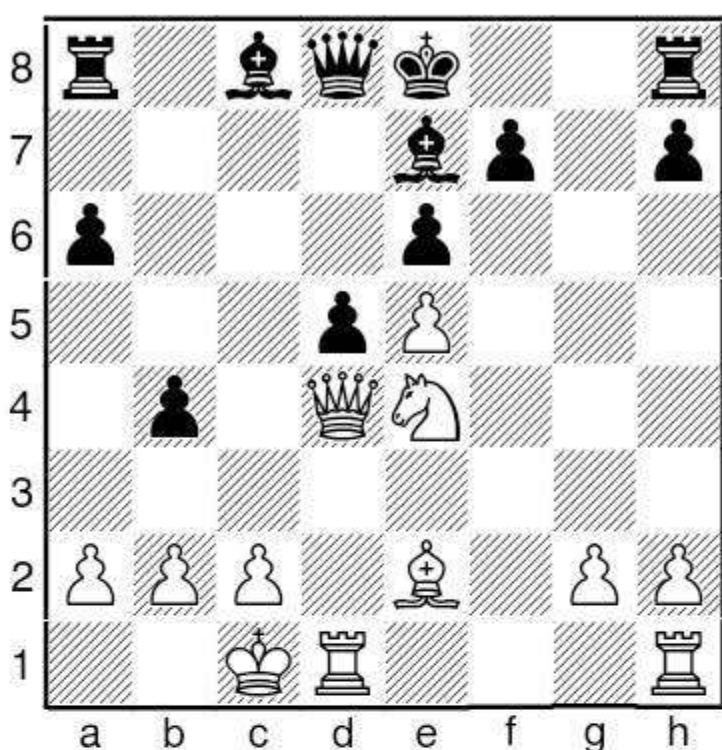
13... ♔c7? led to a disaster for Black in a high-level game:



14. ♘xd5! exd5 15. exf6 ♙d6 16. ♔xd5 ♙xf4† 17. ♔b1 0-0 18. ♙d3  
 White was already winning in Ganguly – Dreev, Montcada 2009.

As mentioned earlier, 13... b4?! is premature due to: 14. ♘e4! fxe5 (14... dxe4 15. ♔xe4 ♙d7 16. ♜xd7 ♔xd7 17. ♜d1† ♔e8

18.♖xd8 19.exf6 ♖x16 20.♗xb4+–) 15.1xe5N A novelty, though it immediately transposes to a game where Black took on e5 a few moves earlier. His position is incredibly dangerous, for instance:



15...♖g8N (15...dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♖d7 17.♖xd7! was winning in Pavlidid – Naoum, Peristeri 2010) 16.♖h5 ♗c7 17.♖hf1 ♖xg2 18.♖d2 ♖xd2 19.♗xd2±

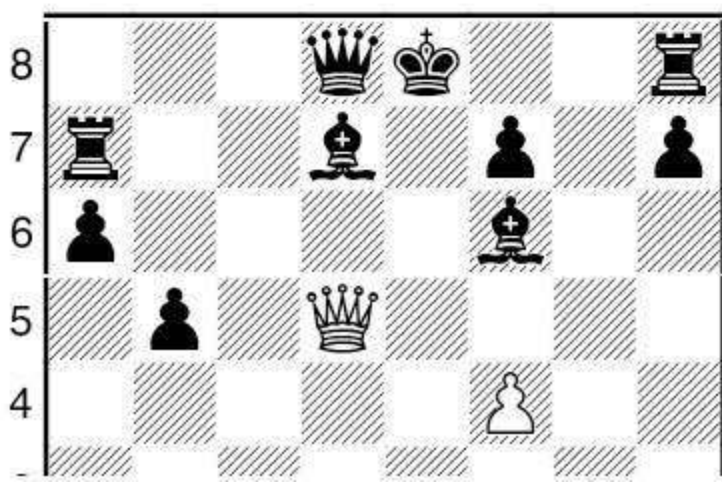
13...♖d7

This keeps the e6-pawn guarded so is worth considering, but White has a convincing answer.

14.♗xd5!N

14.f5!? has done well for White, but the text move seems more precise.

14...exd5 15.exf6 ♖xf6 16.♗xd5 ♖a7





17. ♖xb5! axb5

17...0-0 18. ♖xd7 ♖b8 19. c3 ♖xf4† 20. ♔c2±

17... ♖xb2†!? looks tempting, but after 18. ♔xb2 ♖f6†

19. ♔b1 axb5 20. ♖c5! ♖a6 (20... ♖b7 21. f5!→) 21. f5!

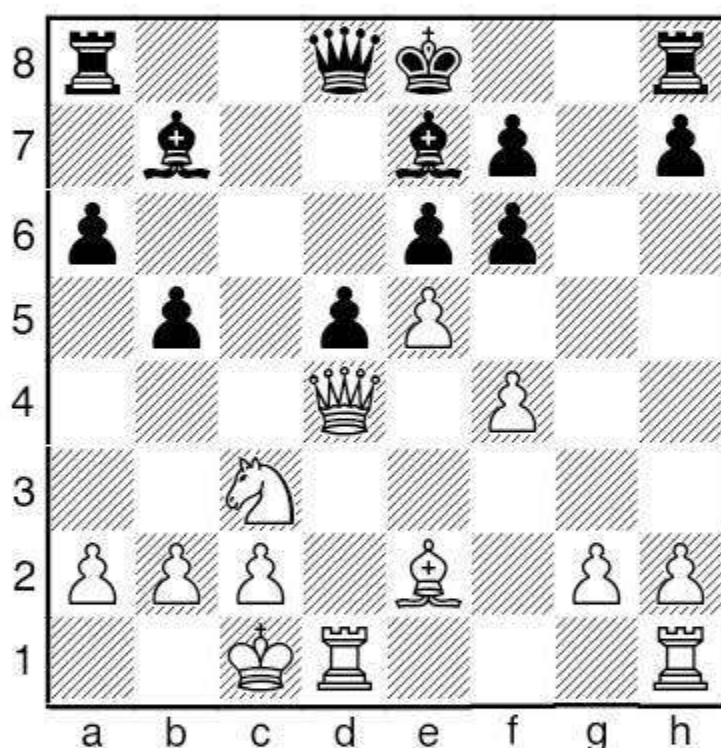
Black is completely stuck.

18. ♖he1† ♖e6 19. ♖xe6† fxe6 20. ♖h5† ♖f7 21. ♖xd8† ♖xd8

22. ♖xb5† ♔f8 23. ♖e5

Black has lots of pieces for the queen but, with so many white pawns, he faces a tough fight for a draw.

### B1) 13... ♖b7



This seems like a natural continuation but now we can launch an attack.

### 14. f5!

This typical move is all the more effective since Black's last move weakened the e6-square.

### 14... fxe5

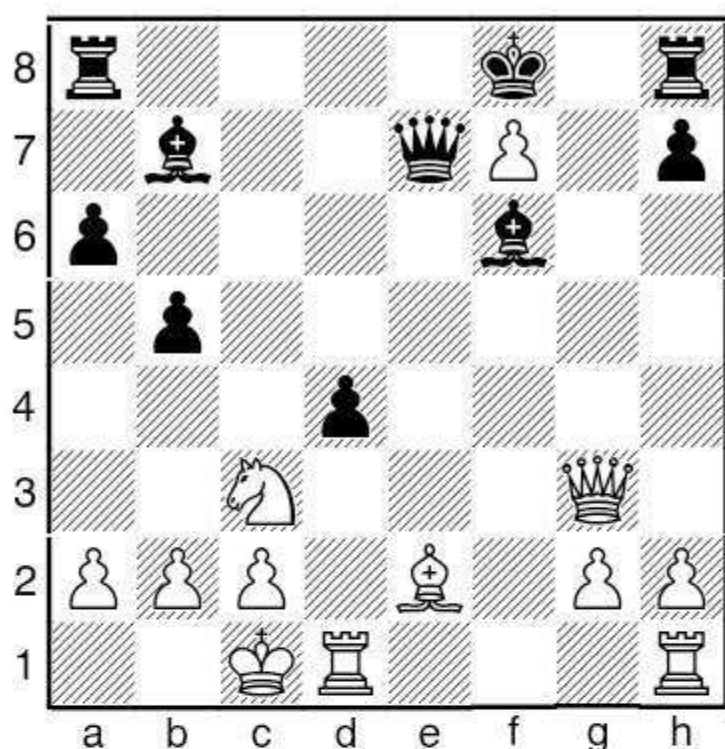
14... b4 15. exf6 ♖xf6 16. ♖xb4±

14... ♖c8N 15. fxe6 fxe6 16. exf6 (16. ♖h5† ♔d7!∞) 16... ♖xf6

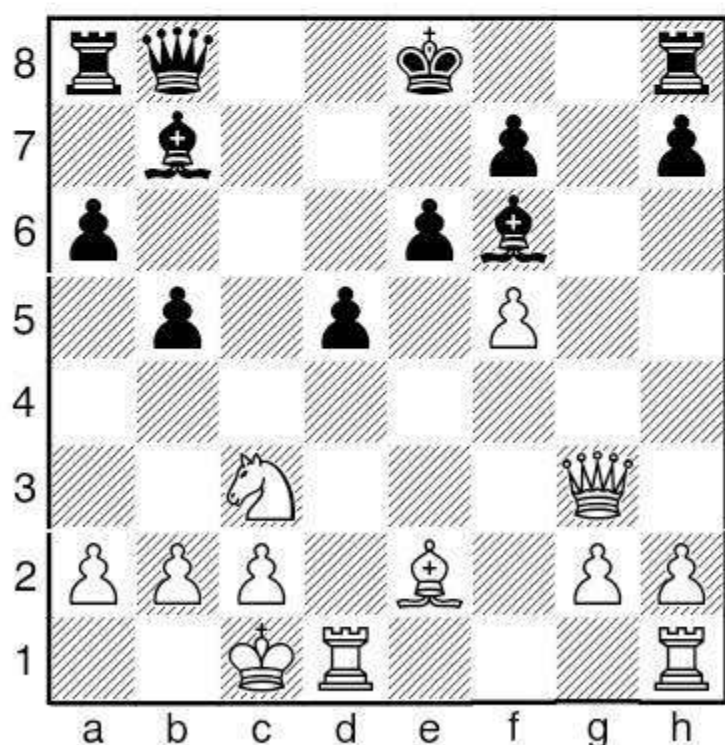
17. ♖g4 gives White a strong initiative.

15. ♖xe5 ♗f6 16. ♖g3 ♔b8

16... ♖e7N 17. fxe6 d4 (17... fxe6 18. ♗h5† ♔d7 19. ♘e4±)  
18. exf7† (18. ♗h5!?) 18... ♔f8



19. ♗f3! dxc3 20. ♖he1 ♖xf7 21. ♗xb7 ♖xb7 22. ♖f1± White regains the piece and, at the minimum, gets an endgame with an extra pawn and excellent winning chances.



17. fxe6

White has more than one good continuation. The text

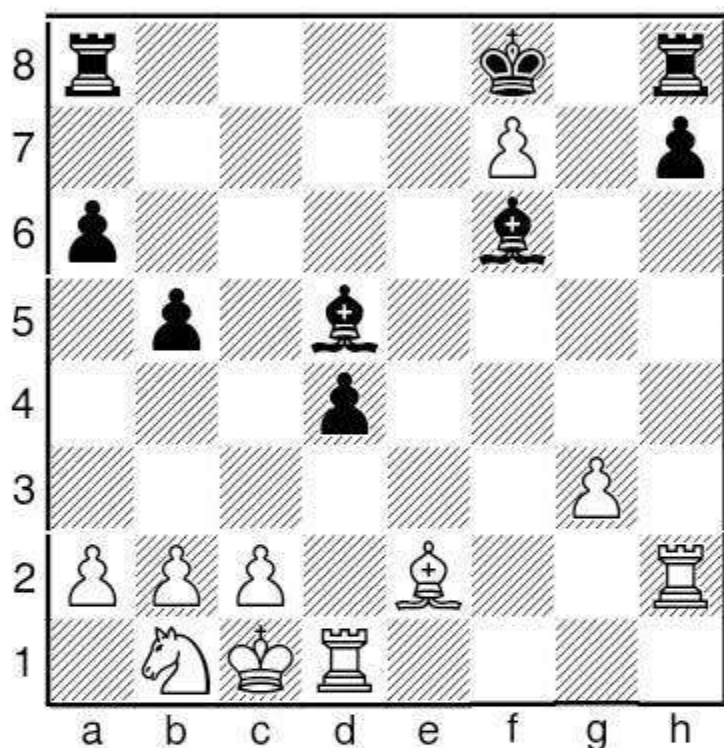


move is the simpler option, aiming for a preferable endgame.

17.♔h3!? leads to interesting complications: 17...d4 (17...b4!? 18.♘a4 ♕c6 19.♘c5↑) 18.fxe6 ♔f4† 19.♔b1 dxc3 20.exf7† ♔f8 21.a3!→ Sengupta – Edouard, Hastings 2011.

17...♔xg3 18.exf7† ♔f8 19.hxg3 d4 20.♘b1 ♕xg2 21.♖h2 ♕d5

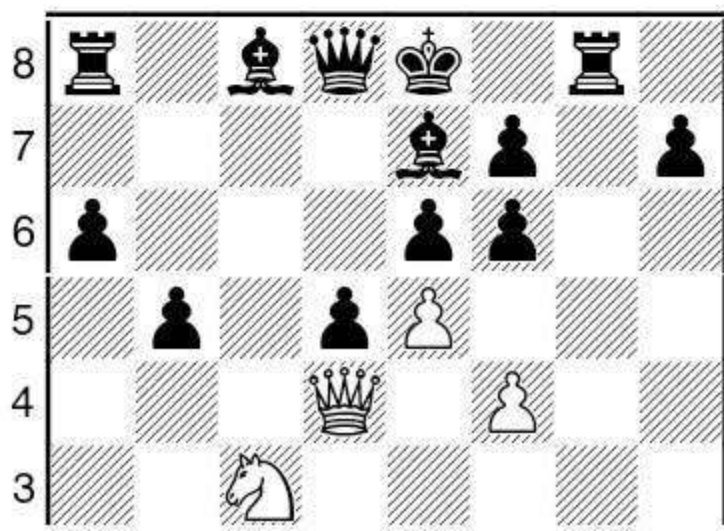
This position occurred in Hassim – Cabrera Pino, email 2008. My choice would be:



22.♕h5N

Black will have to work hard for a draw.

B2) 13...♖g8



This move has scored highly for Black, but I would be happy to see it. If Black takes the g2 pawn, he just opens the kingside for White; but if he doesn't, then what was the point of the rook move?

## 14.♙h5!

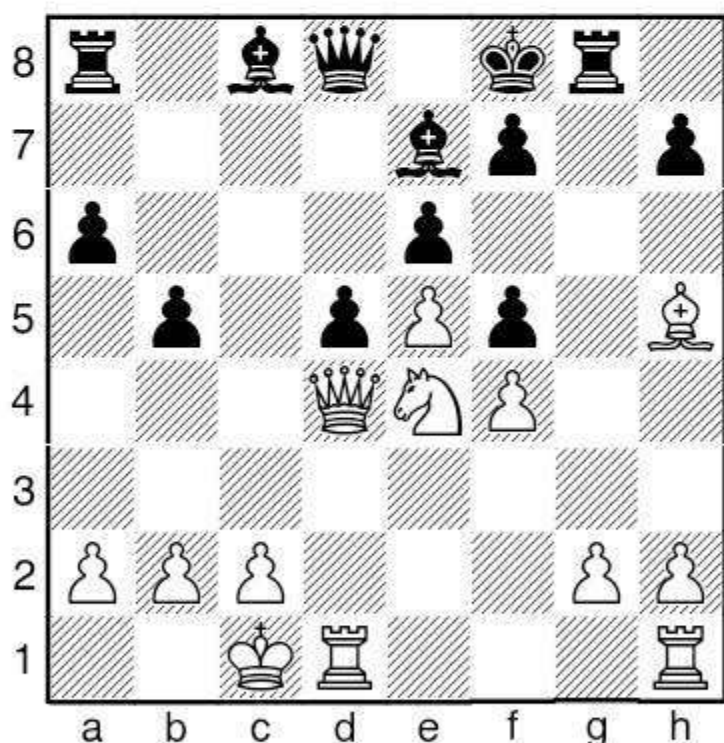
This appears to have been neglected after leading to defeat for White in the stem game, but it is actually a great move if followed up correctly.

## 14...f5

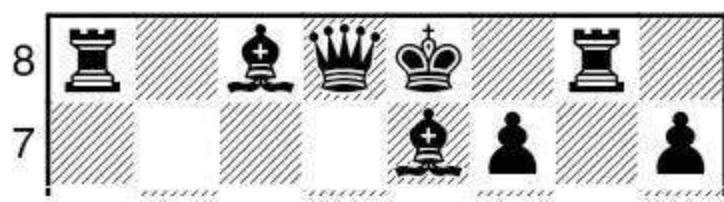
14...♖xg2 15.♗dg1! ♗g6 (15...♖xg1† 16.♖xg1→) 16.♙xg6 hxg6 17.h4! This is why it was important to leave the rook on h1. 17...b4 (17...♔c7 18.h5±) 18.♘a4 ♕a5 19.h5!

14...♖b8 15.f5! ♖xg2 16.♗hg1 gives White a powerful attack.

14...♔f8 15.♘e4!? f5 is also dangerous after:



16.♘f6! ♙xf6 17.exf6 ♕d6 (17...♕c7 18.♕b4† ♔e8 19.g3 ♙b7 20.♗he1+→) 18.g4! fxg4 19.♔b1± With the idea of ♕d3.





## 15.g4!N

Finally, I get to make this sacrifice!

15.h3 ♖xg2 16.♗hg1 ♜g6! gave Black decent compensation in Radovanovic – Lupulescu, Bucharest 2003.

## 15...b4

15...fxg4 gives us several tempting options, for instance:  
16.♔b1!? (16.♞e4↗) 16...♙b7 (16...b4 17.♞e4!→) 17.f5→

## 16.♞e2 fxg4

Black has nothing better than taking the pawn, but White has excellent attacking prospects.

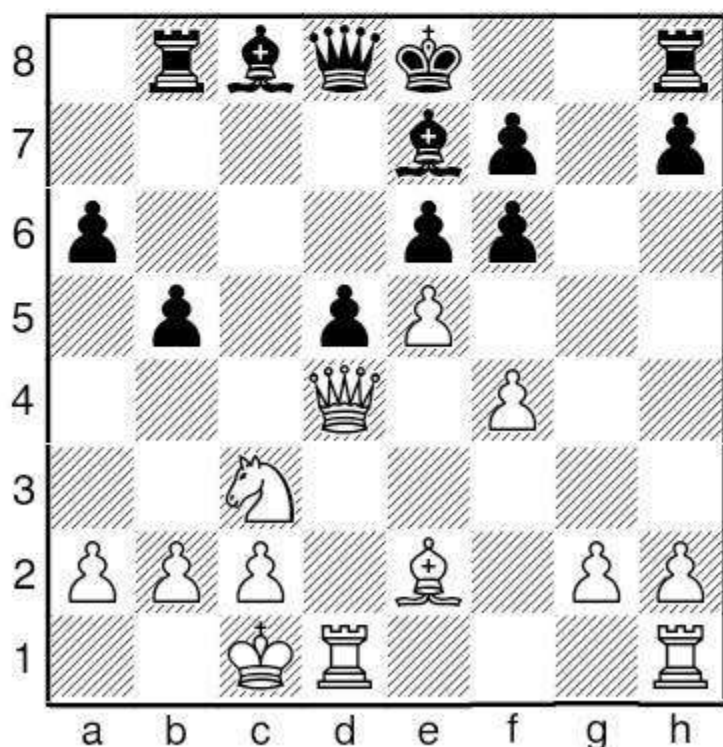
## 17.♔d3

The slow 17.♔b1!? is also good, but there is no real need for it when the direct approach works well.

## 17...♜g7 18.h3!?↗

Black is in serious trouble, as his position is too open.

### B3) 13...♜b8



Preparing ...♔b6 seems to be Black's best bet.

## 14.f5!

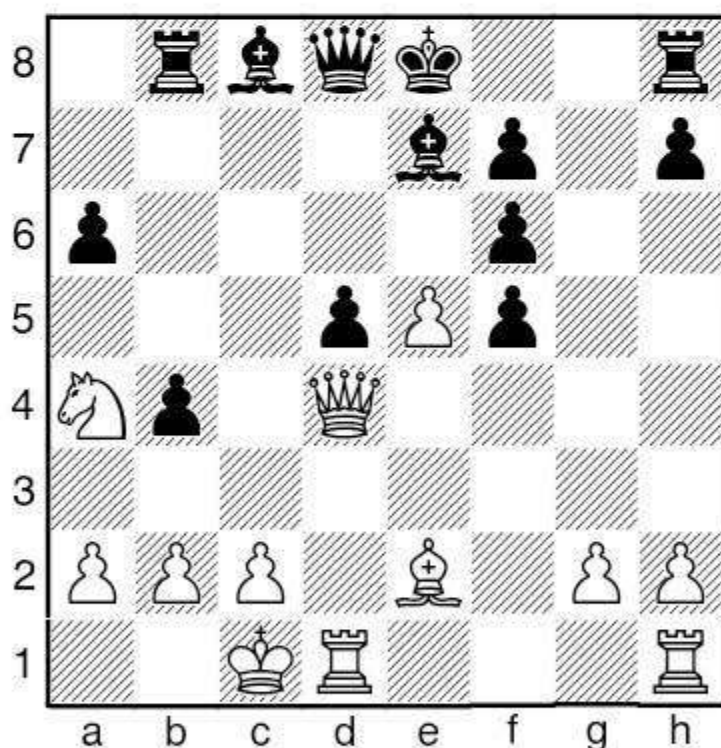
This has only been played once, but of course it is the critical move.

After 14.♘h5 ♔b6 15.♙d3 0-0!? the positioning of White's bishop and queen made it hard to mount much of an attack in Kurmann – Nijboer, Rijeka 2010.

## 14...b4 15.♘a4 exf5!?

15...0-0 16.♖d3 ♔h8 (16...fxe5 17.♖g3†+–) 17.♖h3 ♖g8 18.♖h6!? is dangerous.

When I first looked at this line I did not consider Black's last move. However, when Nijboer used it to equalize against Berg in 2012, I realized it was quite challenging, as the game seems to be heading towards simplifications if White takes back on d5 eventually. But do we really need to capture that pawn?



## 16.g4!N

How can I resist the temptation to play g2-g4 again?

After 16.exf6 ♗xf6 17.♙xd5 0-0 18.♙xd8 ♖xd8= the two bishops made Black's life in the endgame relatively easy in Berg – Nijboer, Germany 2012.



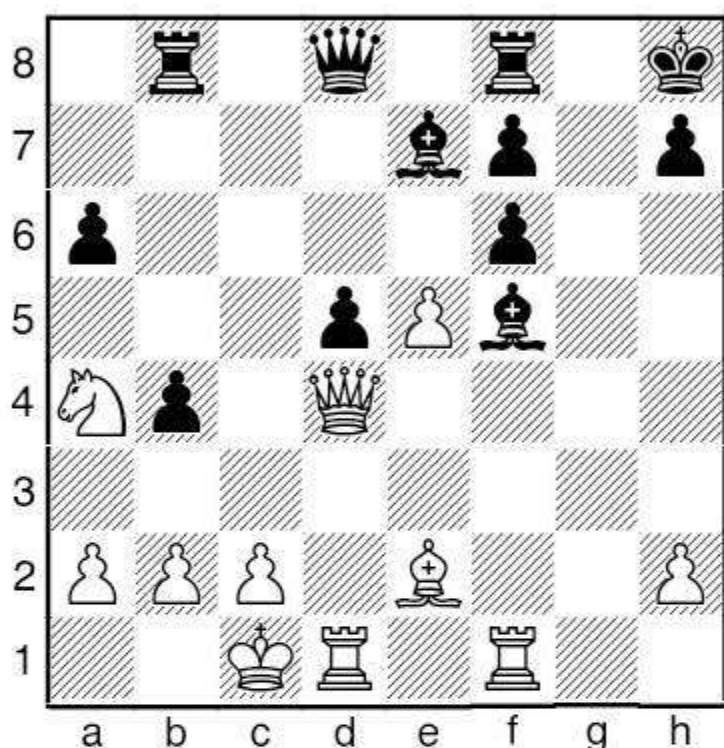
## 16...♖g8!?

I considered three other moves:

16...b3 17.axb3 ♖b4 18.♔c3 doesn't really help Black.

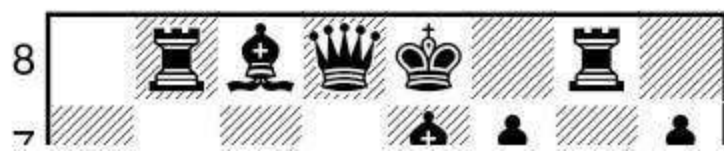
16...fxg4 17.♙xg4 ♖g8 18.♙xc8 fxe5 19.♔xe5 ♖xc8 20.♖hg1±  
Black's position looks too vulnerable.

16...0-0 17.♖hg1 ♔h8 18.gxf5 ♙xf5 19.♖gf1



19...♔c8 (19...♙g6 20.exf6±) 20.♙d3 ♙xd3 21.♖xd3± Again, Black's exposed king will cause him problems for a long time.

Returning to 16...♖g8, it's a rather annoying example of a computer defence. Black's main idea is to play ...fxe5 followed by ...♔d6 to reach a safe endgame, but his whole position just doesn't look right. If White can just avoid the queen exchange, then he must have excellent compensation with Black's position being so exposed. So on closer inspection, I saw that White can keep the initiative as follows.







## 17.gxf5!

17.♖hf1 fxe5 18.♔xe5 ♕d6! illustrates Black's idea, and after 19.♔xd6 ♖xd6 20.♖xd5 ♖xh2 21.gxf5 ♖g1 he should be out of danger.

17.♖he1!? is interesting, but the cold-blooded 17...fxg4 18.exf6 ♖xf6 19.♖c4† ♖e6 seems decent enough for Black.

## 17...♖xf5 18.♖hf1 fxe5 19.♔xe5 ♖e6 20.♔b1!?!?

There is no easy way to continue for Black. His extra pawn isn't worth a lot in the middlegame and it's impossible to force a queen swap. The open g-file might come to haunt him soon as well. Of course he has a lot of options, and it's hard to break through to the king for now, but it seems to me that White's play will be easier for a long time.

## Conclusion

We have dealt with quite a challenging system. 10...0-0!? is an interesting move order, but the flexible 11.♔b1! turns the tables. White waits for 11...b5 before playing 12.♖xf6, placing Black in an awkward dilemma: 12...gxf6 leads to a structure in which Black may come to wish he hadn't castled, while 12...♖xf6 13.e5 dxe5 14.♔e4 leads to material gains if followed up correctly.

10...b5 11.♖xf6 gxf6 12.e5 d5 was our main topic of the chapter. White has tried several moves here but 13.♖e2!? seems like the one that best meets the requirements of the position. The bishop prepares to go to h5, while maintaining various tactical options such as ♖e4 and f4-f5. Black has no obvious path to equality and in many lines his position is in danger of collapsing.



# Chapter 17

## Rauzer



8...♔d7

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6  
6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♔d7

9.f4

A) 9...h6 10.♙h4

A1) 10...♘xe4 11.♚e1 ♘f6 12.♘f5 ♚a5 13.♘xd6†  
♙xd6 14.♖xd6

A11) 14...0-0-0

A12) 14...♚c7

A2) 10...g5

B) 9...♙e7 10.♘f3 b5 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.f5

B1) 12...♚a5

B2) 12...h5

B3) 12...♚b6

A11) note to 15...♚c7



17.♚c3!N

B1) after 18...♚c5



19.♘c1!N

B2) after 15...fxe6

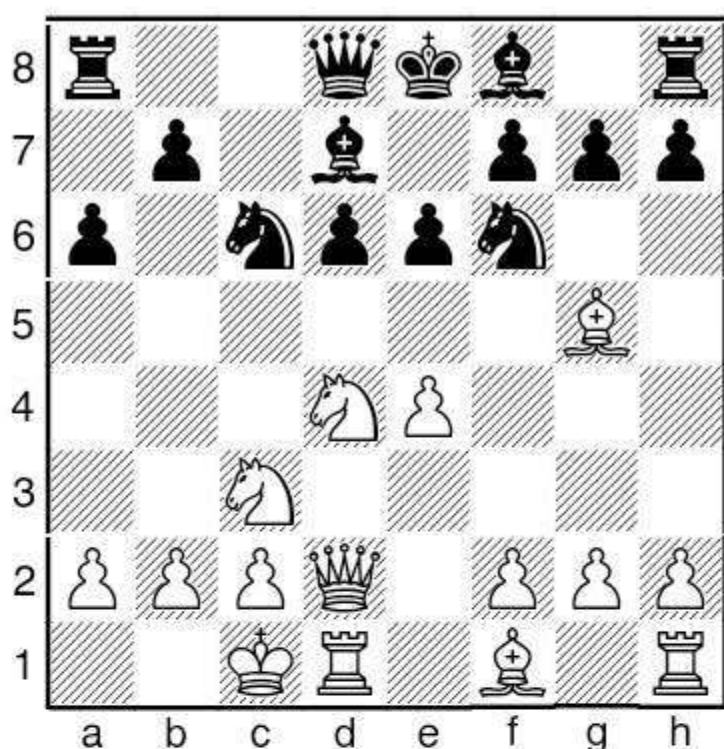


16.♘c2!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6

## 7. ♖d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7

This is the Kozul variation, the biggest main line in the Rauzer right now.



## 9.f4

9.f4 makes a lot of sense as well, but I feel that the text move is more in keeping with the numerous other variations where I have recommended f2-f4.

In this chapter we will deal with **A) 9...h6** and **B) 9...♗e7**.

9...b5 is the main line, which will be covered in Chapters 18 and 19.

### A) 9...h6 10.♗h4

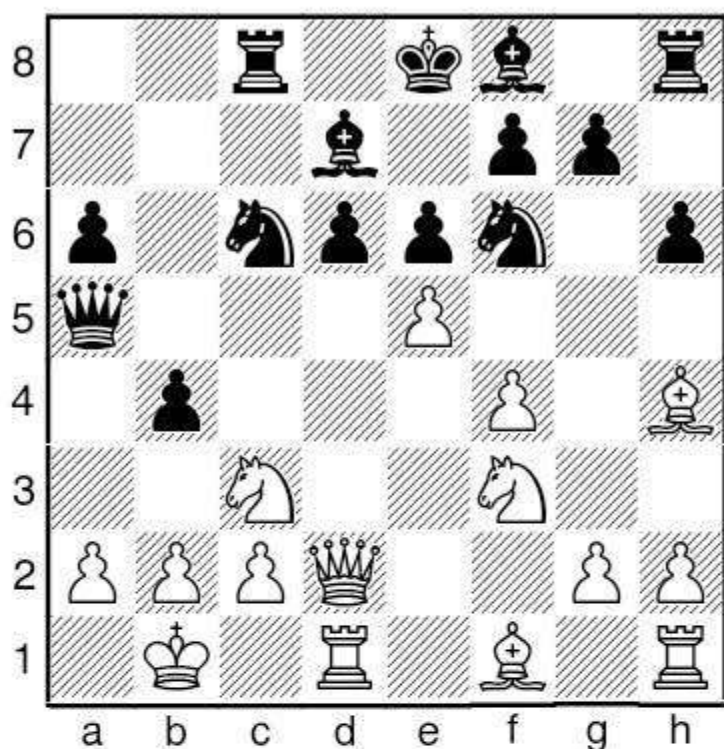
Having driven the bishop back, Black's most consistent ideas are **A1) 10...♖xe4** and **A2) 10...g5**. Both variations are rather out of fashion, but the latter in particular is a tricky line that must be considered seriously.

Both 10...b5 and 10...♗e7 transpose to lines similar to 9...b5 and 9...♗e7. The extra ...h6 move does change much and, in the event of a ...gxf6 structure, it might prove harmful to Black by weakening g6 and depriving the bishop of the h6-



square in some lines.

10...♖c8?! makes little sense after 11.♘f3! – a typical idea which prepares e4-e5. 11...♙a5 (11...♙e7 12.♙xf6 would give White an improved version of the 9...♙e7 lines) 12.♚b1 b5 13.e5! b4

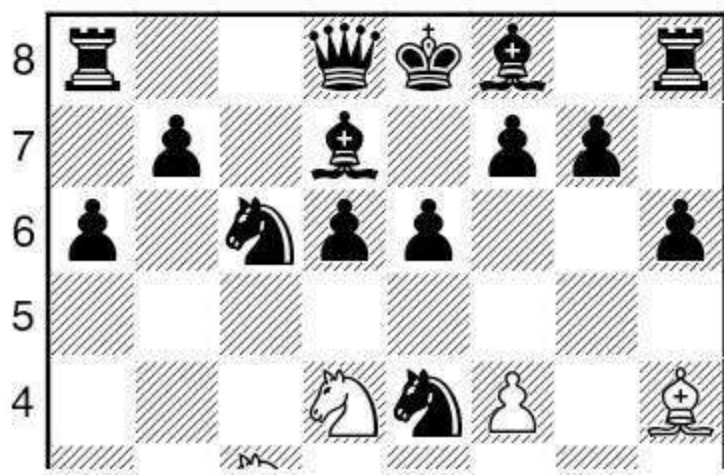


14.exf6! bxc3 15.fxg7 ♖b8? (15...♙xg7 16.♚xd6 ♖c7 17.♙c4±) 16.b3+– Tiviakov – Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

### A1) 10...♘xe4

This is an old move. Obviously it should still be considered, but White gets a comfortable position with just a few accurate moves.

11.♚e1!

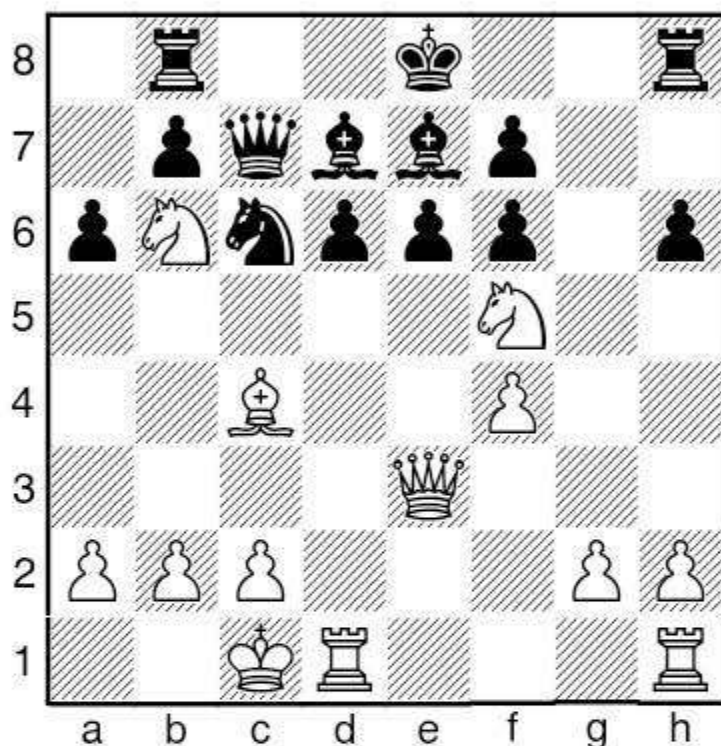


## 11...♘f6

11...g5?! leaves Black's position too exposed: 12.♘xe4 gxf4 13.♚c3 (13.♘f5→ is a strong alternative) 13...♘xd4 (13...♙g7 14.♘xc6 ♙xc3 15.♘xd8+–) 14.♚xd4 ♙c6 15.♚xh8 ♙xe4 16.♙d3 ♙xg2 17.♖he1± Namyslo – Ilyes, email 1999.

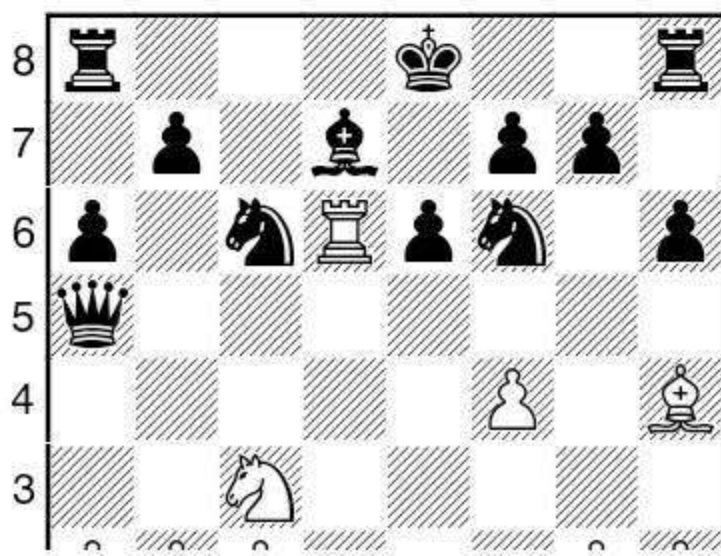
## 12.♘f5 ♚a5

12...♚c7?! is worse: 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♘d5 (14.♘e4!?) 14...♚d8 15.♚e3 ♖b8 16.♘b6 ♚c7 17.♙c4 ♙e7



18.♖xd6! ♙xd6 19.♘d5 ♚d8 20.♘xd6† ♔f8 21.♘b6 With complete domination, Moreira – Becsenescu, email 2007.

## 13.♘xd6† ♙xd6 14.♖xd6





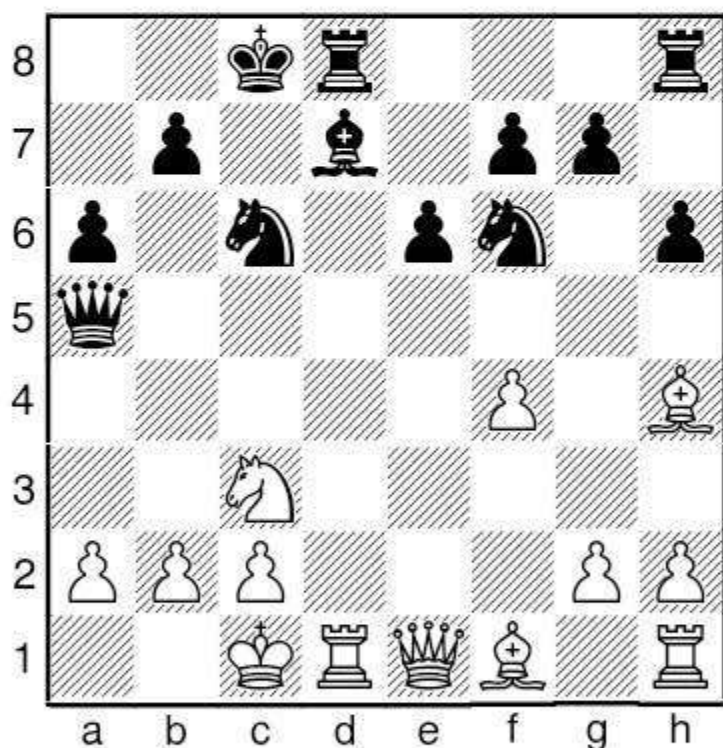
White has regained his pawn and the bishop pair should give him excellent prospects. Black may try **A11) 14...0-0-0** or **A12) 14...♔c7**.

### **A11) 14...0-0-0 15.♖d1!**

This is one of the most important details that is worth remembering should you encounter this line.

15.♔d2 ♘e7↗ was not so clear in Gligoric – Averbakh, Zürich 1953.

15.♖d2 is similar to variation A12 and could transpose if ...♔c7 is played. However, Black can do better with 15...♘e7! 16.♔e5 ♔xe5 17.fxe5 ♘f5, when he has good chances of equalizing.



### **15...♔c7**

15...♘e7? 16.♘d5! shows why it is so important to put the rook on d1 instead of d2. 16...♔xa2 (16...♔xe1 17.♘xe7† ♔c7 18.♙xe1 ♖de8 19.♙b4+–) 17.♔c3†!N (An important improvement, as 17.♘xe7† ♔b8 gives Black decent compensation) 17...♔b8 18.♔e5†



18...♔a8 (18...♖a7 19.♙f2+–) 19.♙c4! ♚a1† 20.♕d2 ♚a5†  
21.b4+–

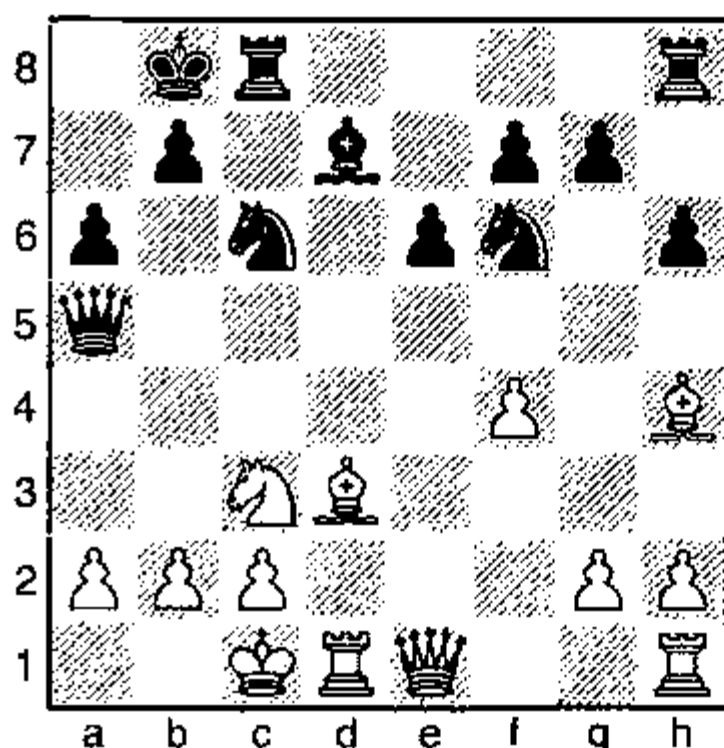
I also considered:

15...♕b8 16.♙d3!?N

16.♙e2 has been played a few times, but I'd like to prevent ...♙e7 by keeping the option of a check on e5. Black does not seem to have a good plan, for instance:

16...♖c8

16...♙b4 17.♙c4! ♚c7 (17...♖c8 18.♙b3 White threatens a2-a3 followed by ♙xf6. 18...♚c7 19.f5!?↑) 18.♚e5 ♖c8 19.a3! ♙c6 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♚xf6±



17.♙xa6! ♙b4 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♖xd7 ♚xa6 20.♚e4!

This brilliant defence gives White the advantage.

20...♖c4 21.♖xb7† ♚xb7

21...♕c8 22.♖a7!±

22.♚xc4 ♙xc2 23.♚e4±

16.♚f2

White just seems to have a better position due to the dark-squared bishop.



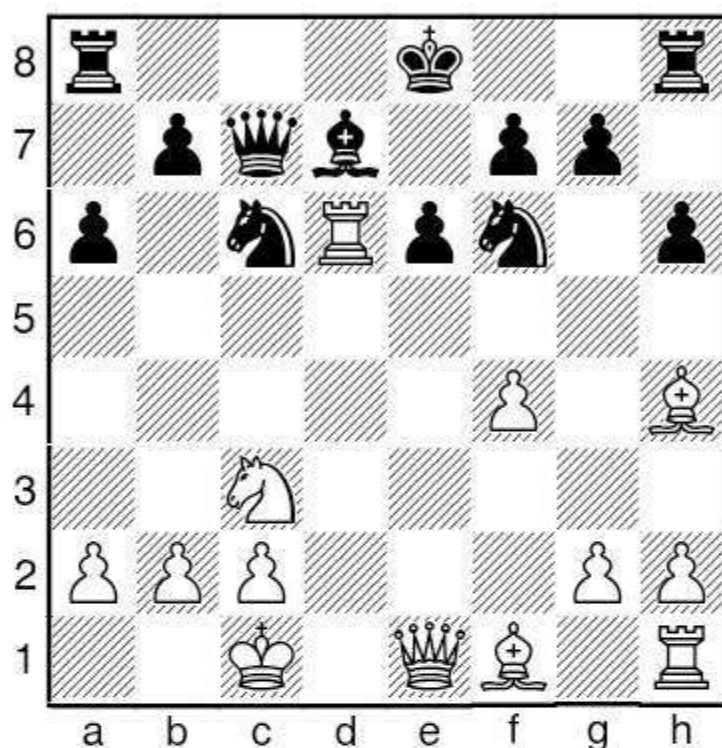
16...♘e7 17.♙d3 ♙c6 18.f5 e5

18...♘xf5 19.♙xf5 exf5 20.♚xf5† ♙d7 21.♚f2±

19.♚he1 ♘ed5 20.♘xd5 ♚xd5 21.♚g3±

Spassky – Rabar, Gothenburg 1955.

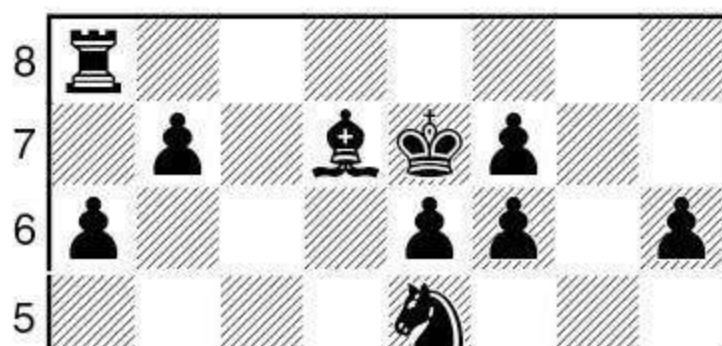
A12) 14...♚c7



This way Black forces the rook to go to d2 rather than d1. However, Black has to spend a tempo and commit his queen.

15.♚d2 0-0-0

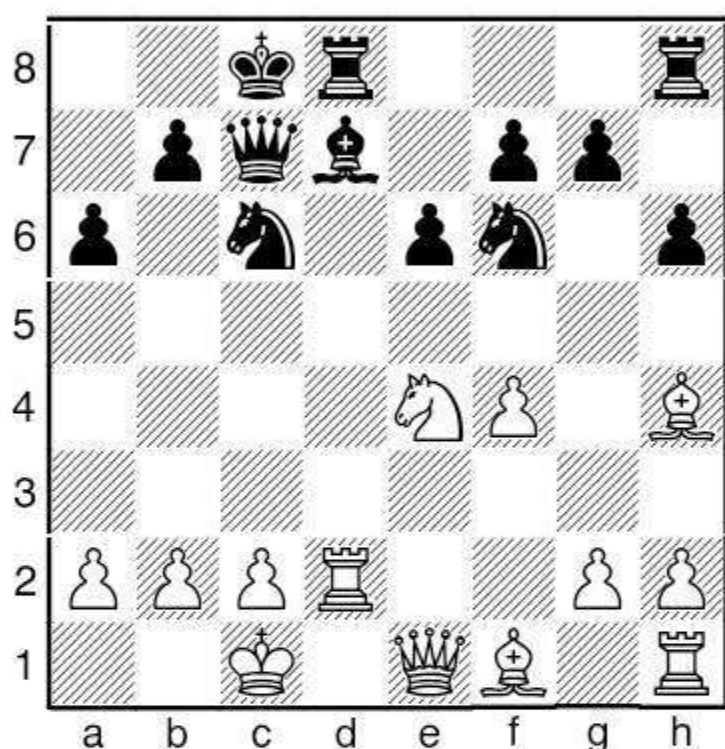
15...♚xf4 16.♙xf6 gxf6!?!N (16...♚xf6 17.♘e4± followed by ♘d6† was not much good for Black in Guseinov – Mamedov, Baku 2002) 17.♘d5 ♚e5 18.♚xe5 ♘xe5 19.♘c7† ♙e7 20.♘xa8 ♚xa8



It is not so easy to convert White's extra exchange, as the interplay of a knight and rook against two rooks is pretty good, as long as the knight has a stable position. White is still in the driving seat though; a logical continuation is 21.g3 ♖c6 22.♙g2 ♖xg2 23.♖xg2 h5 24.♖e1± followed by ♖e4.

## 16.♘e4!?

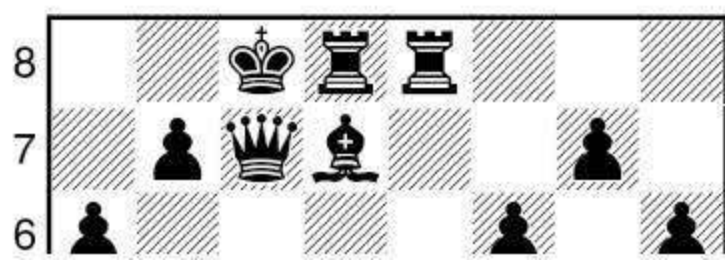
16.♙xf6 has been more popular, and should certainly offer a slight edge. I find the text move more appealing though, as the dark-squared bishop has fantastic potential.



16...♘xe4 17.♙xe4 f6 18.♙g3!? ♖he8 19.♙e2 e5N

19...♙a5 20.a3 e5 has been played, but after 21.♖hd1N± the queen on a5 serves no great purpose. (However, after 21.fxe5? Black was able to show his idea with 21...♙xd2†! 22.♙xd2 ♙f5† winning the exchange, Bertok – Matulovic, Novi Sad 1955.)

20.fxe5 ♘xe5 21.♖hd1





## 21...♙e6

This runs into a strong counter, but Black has a hard time after other moves too:

21...♙c6 22.♙e3±

21...♙c6 22.♙g4† ♔b8 23.♖xd8† ♖xd8 24.♖xd8† ♙xd8 25.♙xe5†  
fxe5 26.♙xe5†±

## 22.♙xa6! ♖xd2

22...bxa6 23.♙a8† ♙b8 24.♖xd8† ♖xd8 25.♖xd8† ♔xd8  
26.♙xb8†+–

## 23.♖xd2 bxa6

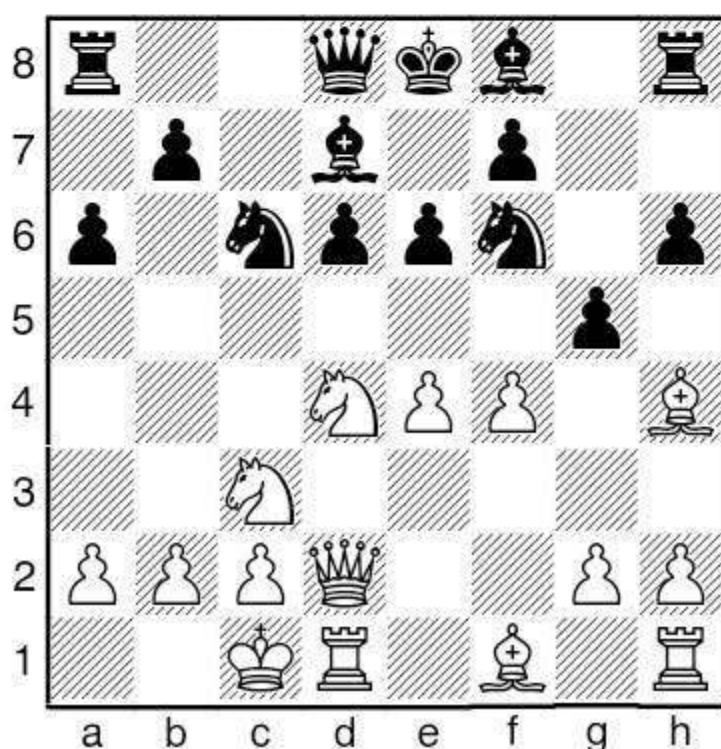
23...♙xa2 24.♙a4 ♙f7 25.♙b5 is crushing.

## 24.♙xe5 fxe5?

Black should play 24...♙b7 and try to draw a depressing endgame a pawn down.

25.♙a8† ♙b8 26.♙c6† ♙c7 27.♙xe8†+–

## A2) 10...g5



The ...g5 thrust is a typical motif in many Sicilians. Even though modern engines seem to regularly hate Black's position, it's not such an easy line to deal with on the board. Often the computers seem to underestimate the knight on e5, or perhaps we human players just overestimate it. In any case, it's worth trying to find out what's really going on.

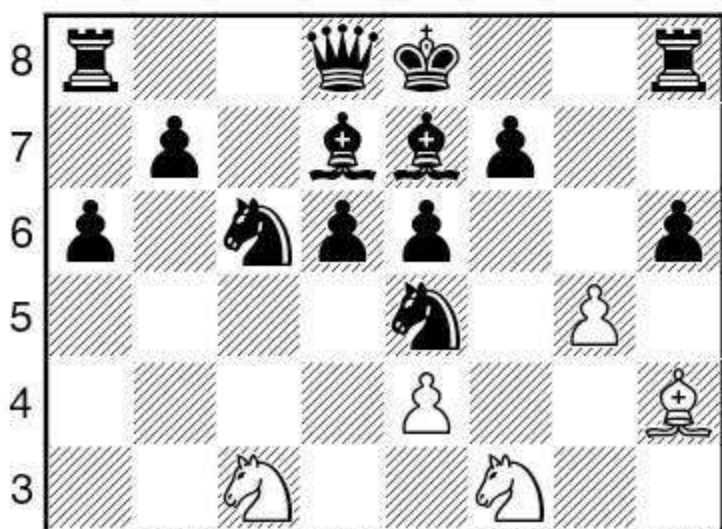
**11.fxg5 ♖g4 12.♔e2**

In one game I mixed up my move order and played 12.♖f3 by mistake. It was a fortuitous error, as my opponent – who was most probably expecting 12.♔e2 – replied with 12...♖ge5?? on autopilot, after which 13.g6! was just winning in Negi – Djukic, Cappelle la Grande 2013.

Instead Black should have played: 12...hxg5! 13.♔g3 Necessary, but it is not my dream home for the bishop. (13.♔xg5? runs into 13...f6! and, due to the eventual ...♔h6 threat, Black is simply winning a piece) 13...♔e7 14.♔b1 ♖ge5∞

**12...♖ge5 13.♖f3 ♔e7**

This position has been reached in well over a hundred games. 14.♖hg1 has been played in the great majority of them, but the ensuing positions always confused me. I also felt Black's position should have decent potential there since White's play just seemed awkward. Therefore I prefer the following suggestion of Goloshchapov, my former coach:





## 14. ♖f2!?

This rare but logical move brought me a victory at the last Olympiad. The idea is to get the bishop out of harm's way and support the ♖a4-b6 manoeuvre.

## 14...hxg5

14... ♘xf3!?N

Considering the ♖xf3 idea played in the game, this move could also be considered – but allowing gxf3 still doesn't feel to me like the right idea for Black.

## 15.gxf3

15. ♖xf3 ♖xg5! 16. ♖e3 ♘e5=

## 15...hxg5 16. ♔b1!?

Preparing f3-f4.

16.h4!? gxh4 17.f4 is another direction. I feel White's chances are better as Black's king will clearly not find a safe haven, and the extra pawn shouldn't matter too much in this type of position.

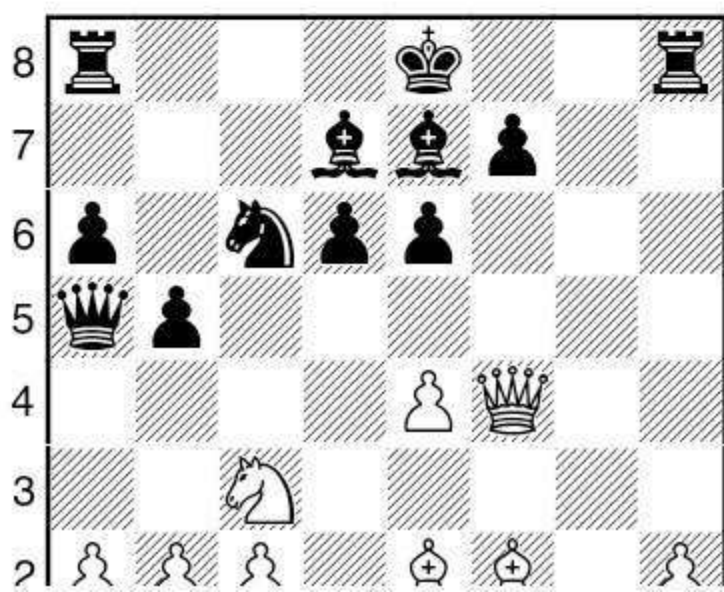
## 16...b5

16... ♕a5 17.f4 gxf4 18. ♕xf4 ♕e5 19. ♕e3± with the idea of ♖g3.

16... ♘e5 17.h4! gxh4 18.f4↑

## 17.f4 gxf4 18. ♕xf4 ♕a5

18... ♘e5 19.a3 ♖b8 (19... ♖g5 20. ♕g3 ♖h4 21. ♕h3±; 19... ♖c6 20. ♖hg1→) 20. ♖hf1 b4 21.axb4 ♖xb4 22. ♖d4 and White keeps a solid edge.

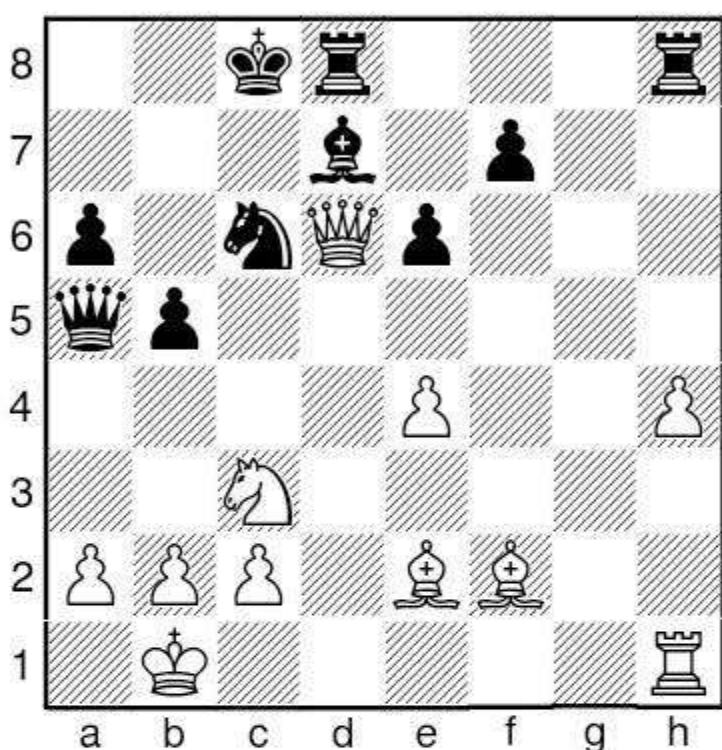


19.♖xd6! ♟xd6 20.♔xd6 0-0-0

After 20...b4 White has many ways to play, but the strongest would seem to be: 21.♞d5! exd5 22.♙g4! 0-0-0 (22...♖d8 23.♙xd7† ♖xd7 24.♔xc6 is close to winning for White) 23.♔xc6† ♔c7 24.♔a8† ♔b8 25.♔xa6† ♔b7 26.♙e2±

21.h4

21.♔c5 b4 22.♞a4 is also promising.



21...f6

21...b4 22.♞a4 ♟e8 23.♔g3±

22.a4 b4 23.♞a2

Black is still alive, but he is under constant pressure.

**15.♞a4 ♞xf3**

15...g4 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞b6 The knight on b6 is far too strong. 17...♖b8 17...♙g5 18.♙e3 ♔xb6 19.♙xg5↑) 18.♔d4±

**16.♙xf3!?**

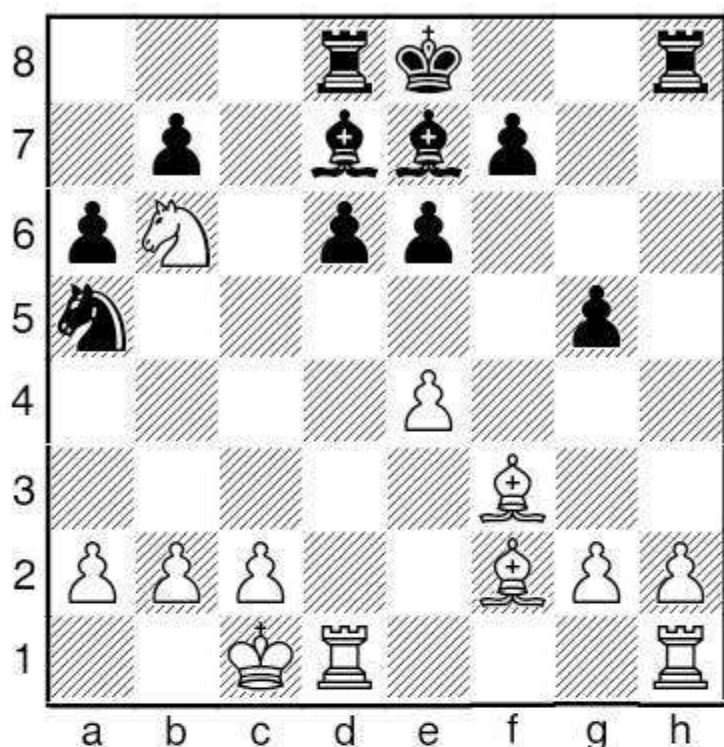
This was my novelty.

16.gxf3 has been played a few times in the older games, but after 16...♔a5 17.♔xa5 ♞xa5 18.♞b6 ♖d8 it is not easy to prove an advantage.



## 16...b5N

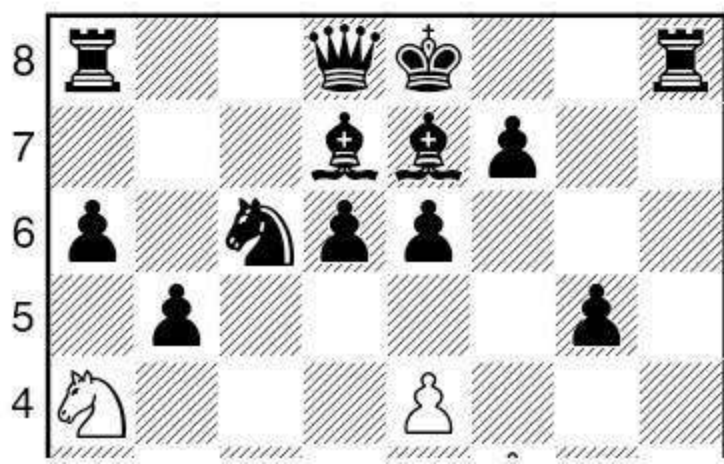
In the game Black tried 16...♔a5, but after 17.♕xa5 ♘xa5 the endgame was no relief for him: 18.♖b6 ♜d8



19.♙g3! e5 20.♘xd7 ♜xd7 21.♙f2 ♘c6 22.♙g4 ♜d8 23.♙b6±  
White's bishops proved too strong in Negi – Djukic, Tromso (ol) 2014.

16...g4?! would not be much help: 17.♙e2 ♘e5 18.♖b6 ♜b8  
19.♔b1±

Also after 16...♘e5N 17.♖b6 ♜b8 18.♙d4 White's knight on b6 is a monster. 18...♙f6 (18...g4? 19.♙xe5 gxf3 20.♘xd7 dxe5 21.♕f2!; 18...♙c6 19.♕c3 ♙f6 20.♘c4 g4 21.♙e2→) 19.♕c3 ♕e7 (19...g4 20.♙e2 ♙c6 21.♘c4±) 20.♔b1 ♜h6 21.h3± White has a clear pull.

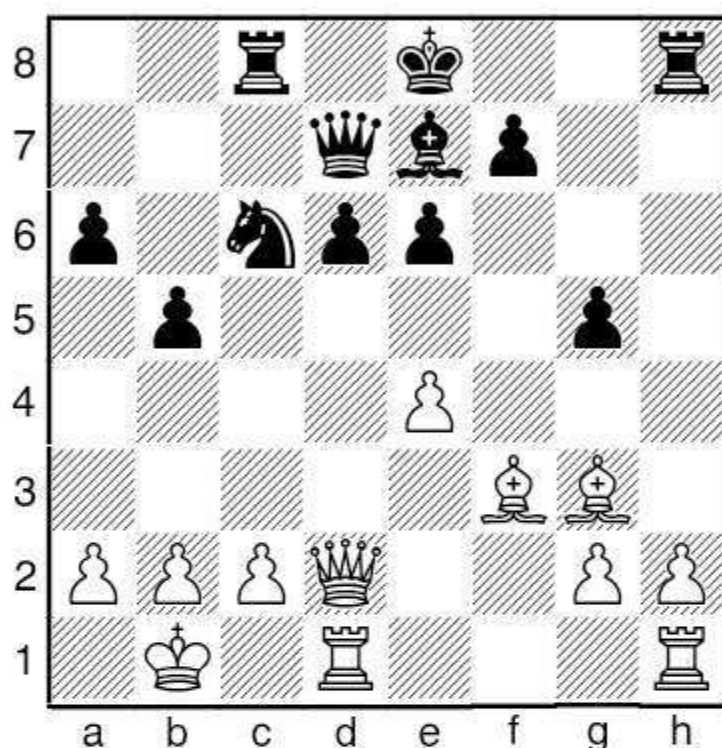


17. ♖b6 ♜b8 18. ♘xd7 ♚xd7 19. ♙g3 ♜c8

19... ♜d8 20. ♚c3!±

20. ♚b1

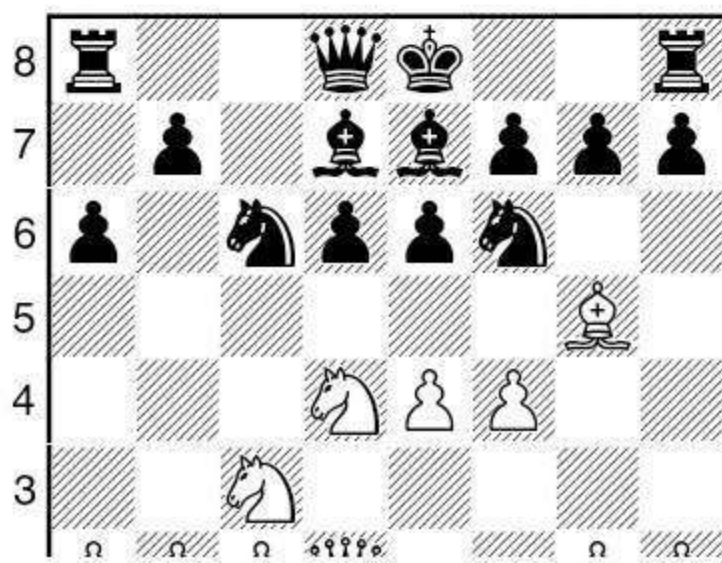
White is not yet interested in trying to take the pawn on d6, as Black would be pretty well coordinated in the endgame. Instead we should continue to improve the position and perhaps attack along the f-file.



20... ♚c7 21. c3 ♘e5 22. ♙e2±

Black's king remains uncomfortable and I don't see a good way for him to get counterplay.

B) 9... ♙e7





This is rather an old move. It's a natural way to develop, but the drawback is that Black will usually be forced to play a passive version of the ...gxf6 structure. Recently this line was picked up by Dubov, but I doubt that his results will inspire many imitators. Nevertheless, it's good to be familiar with the plans.

## 10. ♖f3 b5

10...h6?! provokes the exchange on f6, which White wants to play anyway. It makes no sense to claim that ...b5 is a weakening move in that structure; rather, Black needs to advance on the queenside if he wants to have any chances of activity.

## 11. ♕xf6

There are other moves like 11.e5 and 11.a3 which lead to interesting complications, but those would justify Black's set-up. If you're going to play the Rauzer with White, then you need to get comfortable with the ...gxf6 structure.

## 11...gxf6

### 11...♕xf6

This was played quite a few times in the old games, but Black just seems to be a pawn down without much compensation.

### 12. ♖xd6 ♕e7

12...♕xc3 13.bxc3±

12...♖a7 13.e5 ♕e7 14.♖d2 ♖a5 15.♔b1 ♕b4 16.♘g5!

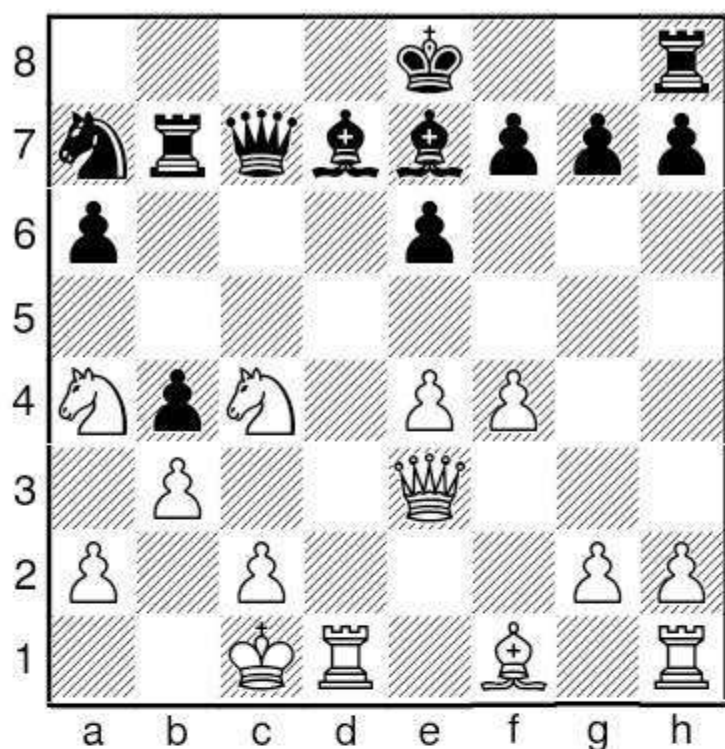
White's idea is to transfer this knight to d6 via e4 after the exchange of queens on c3. 16...♕xc3 17.♖xc3 ♖xc3 18.bxc3 ♘a5 19.♘e4± Vatter – Heinbuch, Germany 1985.

### 13. ♖d2 b4 14. ♘a4 ♖a7

14...♘b8 15.♖d4!±



15.♔e3! ♚a5 16.b3 ♖b7 17.♘d2 ♞a7 18.♞c4 ♚c7



19.♖xd7! ♚xd7 20.♞c5 ♙xc5 21.♚xc5 White had excellent play for the exchange in Psakhis – Geller, Moscow 1986.

## 12.f5

12.♔b1 is likely to transpose after a subsequent f4-f5. White's main idea is simply to exchange on e6 and play against the e6-pawn. Typical manoeuvrings include ♞e2-f4 followed by g2-g3 and ♙h3, or sometimes even ♙d3, c2-c3 and ♙c2-b3, depending on the situation. We just have to be careful to avoid Black's counterplay, which usually isn't too difficult.

Black has three main ways to continue. **B1)** 12...♚a5 is a try for a quick queenside attack; **B2)** 12...h5 is a flexible move which has been played by Dubov; finally, **B3)** 12...♚b6 has been the most popular choice of all.

12...♖c8 is similar to the first main variation below, and after 13.♔b1 I don't see anything better than transposing to it with 13...♚a5.

**B1) 12...♚a5 13.♔b1 ♖c8**



I don't really believe in this line for Black, but proving an advantage is actually not as simple as I anticipated.

### 14.g3!?

Just ignoring the ...♘b4 plan.

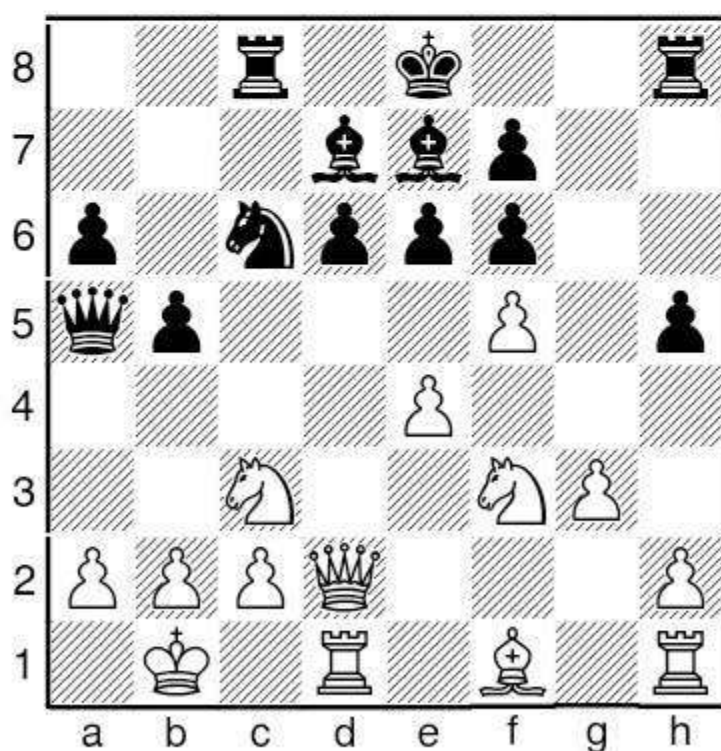
14.♙d3 ♘b4 15.♘d4 ♖xc3!N 16.♙xc3 ♔xa2† 17.♚c1 d5!  
creates some mess.

14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♙h6 is the most ambitious try, but it seems unnecessarily double-edged. 15...♘b4 16.a3 ♘c6!? 17.♘d2 (17.e5 b4⇒) 17...♘e5 18.♘b3 ♙b6 19.♙g7 ♖f8 We have been following Poetsch – Acs, Austria 2013. White might still be better, but Black still has considerable attacking potential on the queenside.

14.♙h6 ♘b4 15.a3 ♘c6 is similar to 14.fxe6 above.

### 14...h5

14...♘b4N 15.♙h3! ♖xc3 16.♙xc3 ♔xa2† 17.♚c1 isn't too dangerous, so Black makes a neutral move.

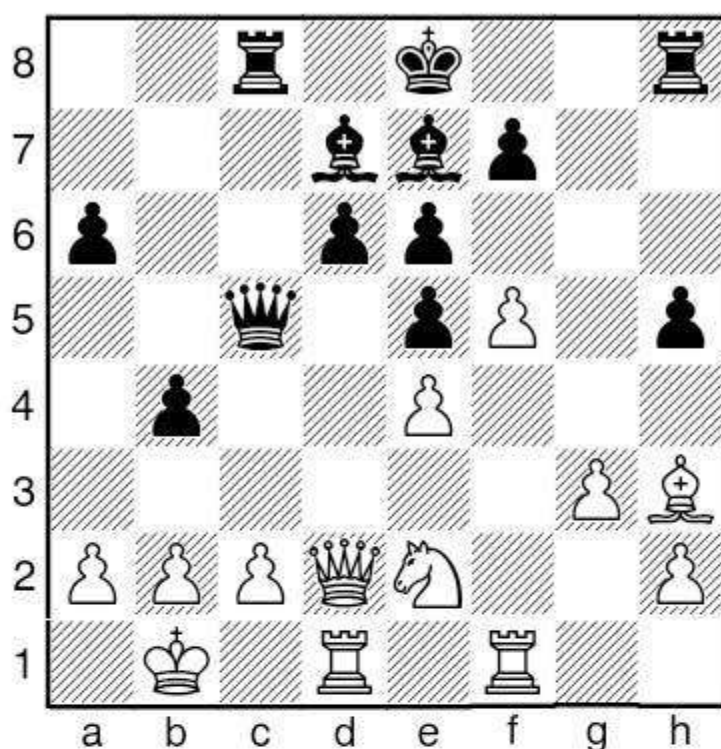


### 15.♙h3 ♘e5 16.♘xe5 fxe5

Quite an unusual structure has arisen. The e7-bishop is surely happy with the change, but Black still faces some

pressure on the light squares, and his king is unlikely to be safe for a long time.

**17. ♖hf1 b4 18. ♗e2 ♔c5**



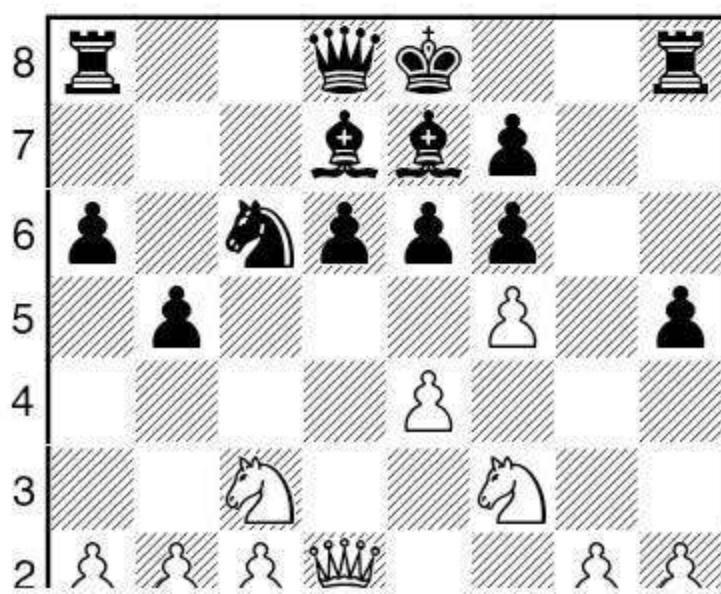
**19. ♗c1!? N**

19.c3 led to a mess in Huschenbeth – Boros, Greensboro 2014. I don't see any need to open the queenside, and instead we can just improve the knight.

**19...a5 20. ♗d3 ♔b5 21. b3!±**

Intending ♗b2-c4 and perhaps ♔f2.

**B2) 12...h5**





This has been tested twice by Dubov. At first it seems like an odd choice with the bishop on e7. However, Black's idea is to neutralize the g2-g3/♗h3 plan by preparing to transfer the knight to g4. We will follow the example of Peter Leko for a few moves.

### 13.♔b1

Black's idea worked perfectly after 13.g3 ♘e5! 14.♘d4 ♚b6 15.♗h3 ♘g4! in Ter Sahakyan – Dubov, Minsk 2014. White's bishop is blocked, and Black has a great deal of flexibility having not played ...0-0-0 too quickly.

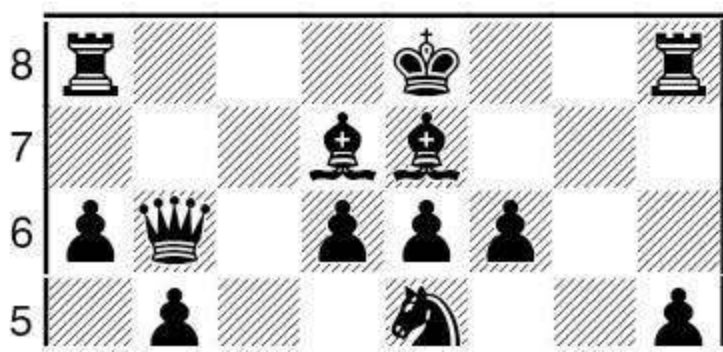
### 13...♚b6 14.♗d3!?

14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♘e2 ♚f2! would be annoying.

14.♚e1N is another way of preparing fxe6 and ♘e2. The text move does the same thing though, and since the g2-g3 plan is less appealing, there's no reason to leave the bishop on f1. Moreover, 14...♘e5 15.♘d4 ♚b7!? is an interesting attempt to prevent ♘ce2.

Since Black's idea seems to be primarily aimed against the plan of g2-g3 and ♗h3, lines, I quite like Leko's simple set-up. As we will see, the structure with fxe6 often proves unpleasant for Black if White just plays slow developmental moves, keeping Black's counterplay restricted. That's exactly what Leko does in this highly instructive game. Although the bishop looks passive on d3, it can eventually make its way towards the e6-target after c2-c3 and ♗c2-b3.

### 14...♘e5 15.fxe6 fxe6



## 16. ♖e2! N

I'd like to follow Leko's plan, while introducing a more accurate way of implementing it.

The game continued:

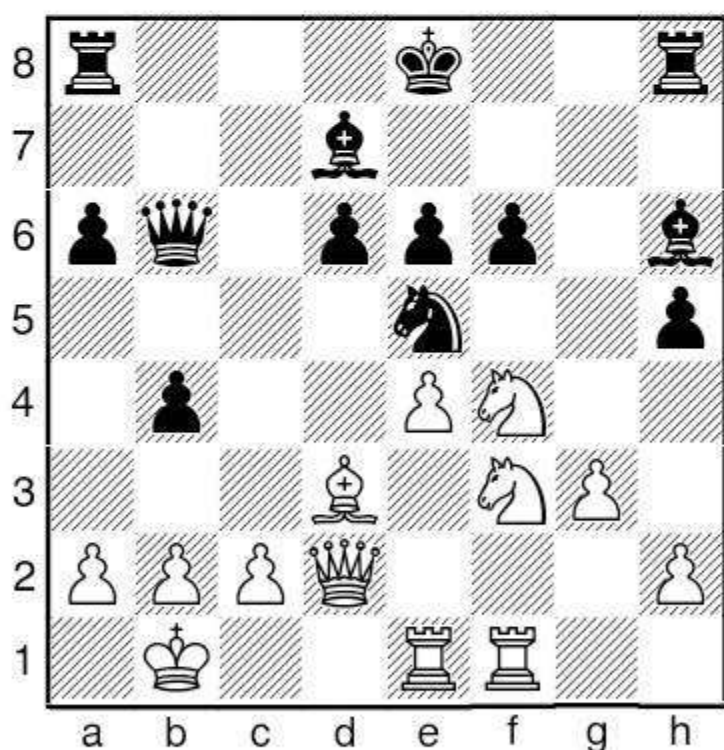
## 16. ♖hf1

Leko obviously wanted to prevent the black queen from invading on f2 after ♖e2, but that problem can easily be solved. The trouble with the text move is that ... ♘g4 ideas may prove annoying.

## 16... b4?

Now White gets everything he wants. This move not only forces the knight manoeuvre that White wants to play anyway, but also weakens Black's queenside. 16... 0-0-0 N is better, and after 17. ♖e2 (17. h3 ♖hg8+) 17... ♘g4! the position is unclear.

17. ♖e2 ♘g4 18. ♖de1 ♕f8 19. ♖f4 ♕h6 20. g3 ♖e5



21. ♖e2 ♕xf4 22. gxf4 ♖xd3 23. ♖xd3±

Leko – Dubov, Loo 2014.

## 16... 0-0-0

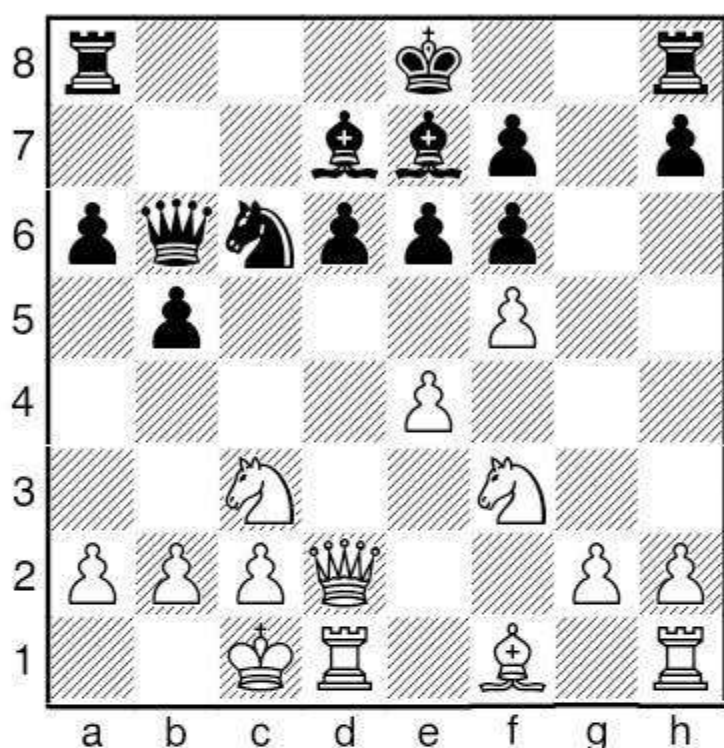
16... ♖f2? can be refuted by 17. ♖hf1 ♖xg2 18. ♖e3! ♘g4 19. ♖b6!+– and the queen will be trapped.



16...♞c4 17.♙xc4 bxc4 18.♞f4 ♖b8 19.c3 Black's position is full of targets, and the two knights are ideally placed to assist in exploiting them.

17.♞f4±

### B3) 12...♔b6



13.♔b1

13.♞e2?! is a typical mistake, allowing Black to force the queens off with 13...♔a5!.

13.fxe6 fxe6 14.g3 allows 14...b4 15.♞e2 ♔f2! and once again it's hard to avoid the queen exchange.

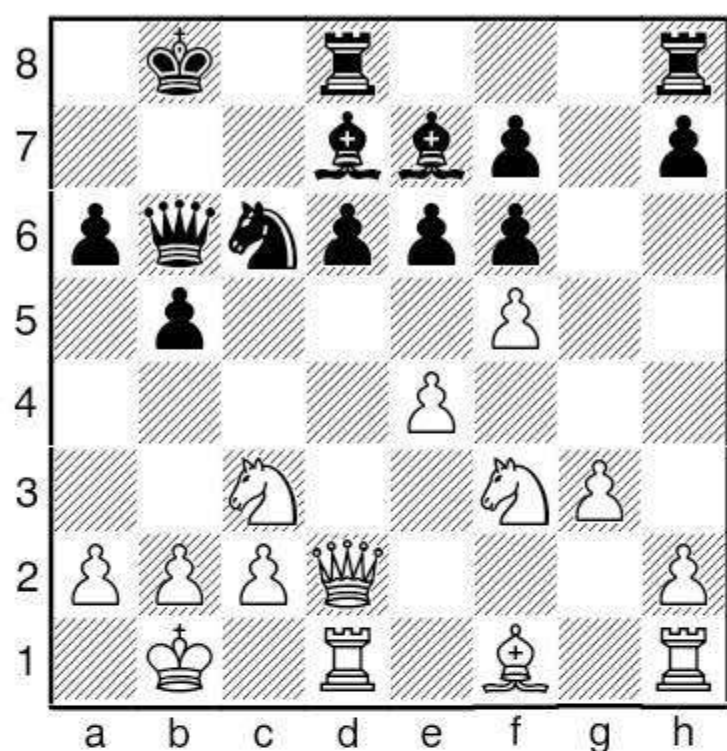
After the text move, the game count on the database jumps to move then 300. I will focus on Black's most logical moves while demonstrating the main plans which can be applied in different scenarios.

13...0-0-0

Note that 13...b4 14.♞e2 ♔f2?! is pointless when White has not played g2-g3, as we can simply play 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♔h6±.

### 14.g3! ♖b8

Here too, 14...b4 15.♘e2 ♚f2 does not work. White responds with 16.♚d3± and, with ...0-0-0 having been played, it's a totally different situation.



### 15.fxe6!

It is important not to delay this exchange any longer. Actually there was no special reason to delay it this much, and you could equally go for fxe6 a move or two earlier; I just wanted to emphasize the moment when it becomes essential.

15.♙h3 has been played several times, but it allows Black to change the course of the game with: 15...b4! 16.♘a4 (16.fxe6?? bxc3-+; 16.♘e2 e5 leaves both white knights a long way from the d5-square) 16...♚b7 White's position is still okay, but I would prefer to send the knight to e2 and f4 rather than a4.

### 15...fxe6 16.♙h3 ♙c8 17.♚e1!

By removing the queen from the d-file, White takes the sting out of ...d5 ideas.

17.♘e2?! allows 17...d5!; it is precisely this type of



counterplay that we need to avoid in such positions.

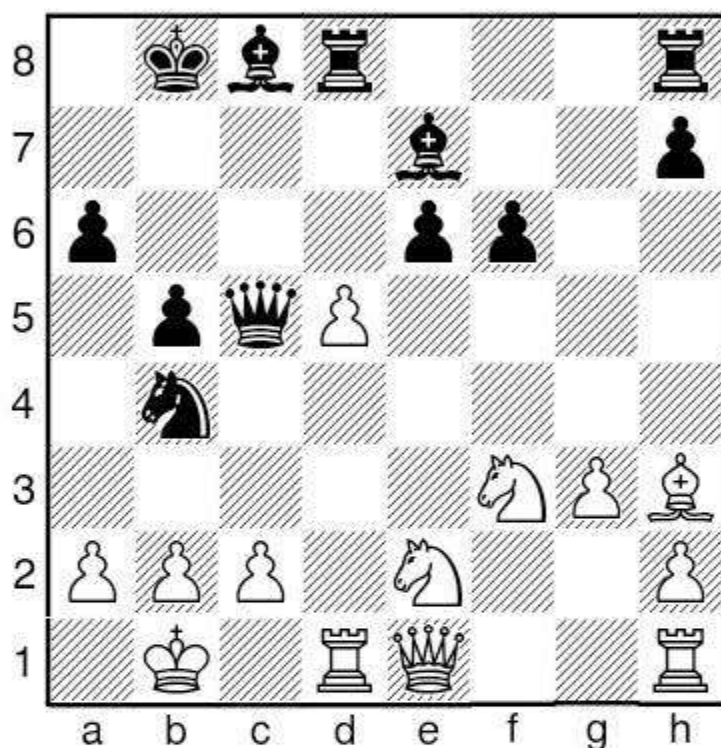
17.♖hf1 b4 18.♘e2 (18.♘a4 ♚b5 19.b3 d5 is similar) 18...d5!  
and Black should be okay.

**17...♗he8**

17...♚c5 18.♘e2 d5

Several players have aimed for counterplay this way,  
but Black is being too optimistic.

19.exd5 ♘b4



20.♘fd4! ♘xd5 21.♘xe6

21.♘b3 ♚b6 22.♘ed4 ♖d6±

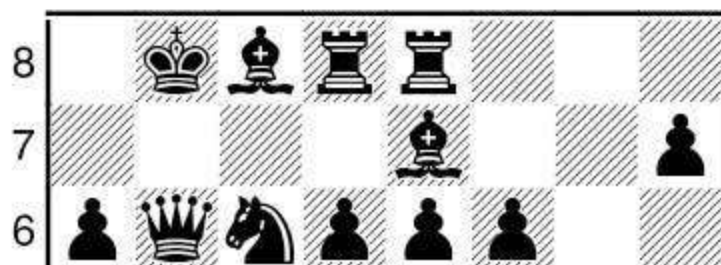
21.♙xe6 ♘e3 (21...♙b7 22.♙xd5 is okay for White.)

22.♙xc8 (22.♖d2 ♙b7±; 22.♖d3 ♘xc2!) 22...♘d1

23.♙xa6 ♘xb2!±

21...♙xe6 22.♙xe6 ♘e3 23.♖xd8† ♖xd8 24.♚c1±

White was able to convert the extra pawn in Vasquez  
Nigro – Kulczycki, email 2010.



## 18.♖f1!

This is the most precise move order.

18.♘e2 allows the troublesome 18...♘e5! with some counterplay for Black: 19.♖f1 (19.♘xe5 dxe5! is an excellent structure for Black) 19...♘c4! 20.♘f4 ♕f8 (20...d5!?) White must be careful, as ...d5 and ...f5 ideas abound.

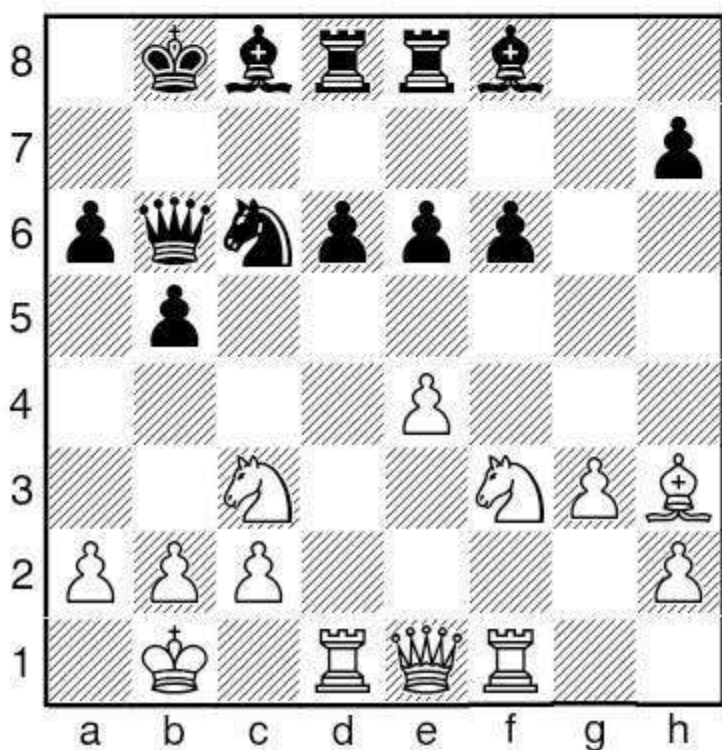
## 18...♕f8

18...♘e5? allows 19.♘d4! b4 20.♘a4 ♔a5 21.b3 and Black's position falls apart.

18...♔c5!? has usually been met by 19.♘e2, but 19...d5! gives Black good play, for instance: 20.exd5N (20.♘f4 dxe4 21.♔xe4 f5= Safarli – Durarbayli, Baku 2010) 20...♘b4 21.♘ed4 e5 22.♘c6† ♘xc6 23.♕xc8 ♘b4→

Fortunately White has more than one possible improvement. The prophylactic 19.a3N ensures that ideas such as ...d5 and ...♘b4 will no longer work, and meanwhile White intends the usual ♘e2 plan.

Alternatively, 19.♔f2!?N gives White a pleasant version of the endgame. Black has obvious pawn weaknesses and his bishops are not doing much.





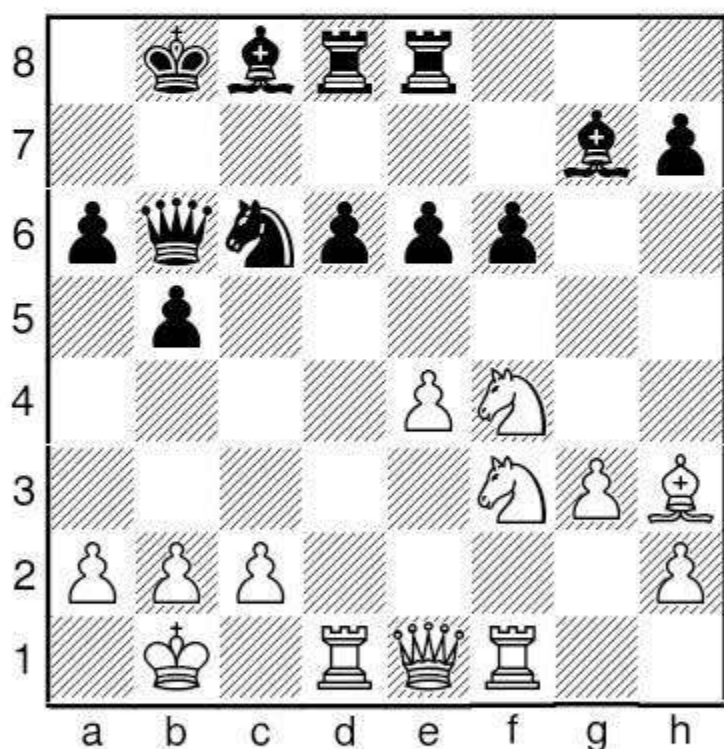
## 19. ♖e2 ♔g7

19... ♖e5 20. ♖fd4 maintains the pressure, although White could also consider 20. ♖xe5!? N 20... fxe5 21. a3 when Black's structure is not ideal.

19... ♖e7 20. ♖fd4 ♖xd4 21. ♖xd4 ♔g7 22. ♔b4! ♔a8 23. a4 went swiftly downhill for Black in Sax – Ashwin, Kecskemet 2012.

## 20. ♖f4

By this stage White has avoided most of the tactical tricks, and reached exactly the kind of position he wants. You still have to be careful about sudden tricks – like the one that led me to lose with White in one of the games below! – but with careful play White should be firmly in control. I will just show a few more games and lines to illustrate this point.



## 20... ♔h8

20... ♖a5? 21. ♖d4 ♖c4 22. ♖dxe6± went downhill for Black rather fast in Grandelius – Salem, Chennai 2011.

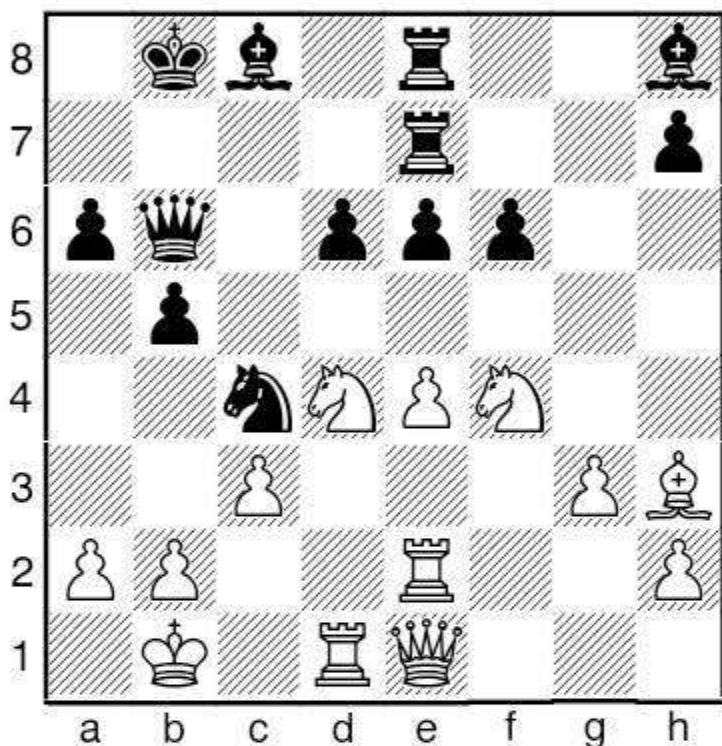
20... ♖e7 21. ♖f2!? ♔h6 22. ♖e2 One of many possible regroupings. 22... b4



23.c3!? a5 24.cxb4 ♖xb4 25.a3N (25.♘d4 e5! led to a lot of unwanted tactics in Negi – Ashwin, Aurangabad 2011.)  
 20...♔c5 21.a3 f5 22.exf5 exf5 23.♚f2± left Black with several weak pawns in Karjakin – Ivanchuk, Moscow 2009.

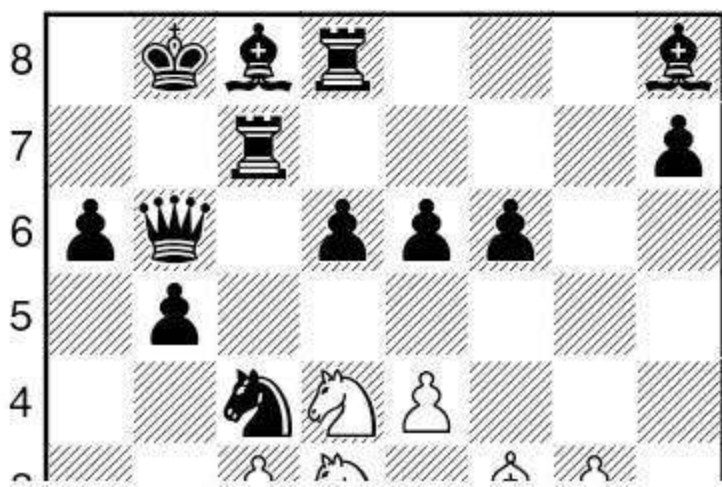
**21.♚f2 ♘a5 22.♚e2 ♘c4 23.c3 ♚e7 24.♘d4 ♚de8**

White has many plans. The following game may not be computer-perfect, but it nicely illustrates some of the possible manoeuvres.

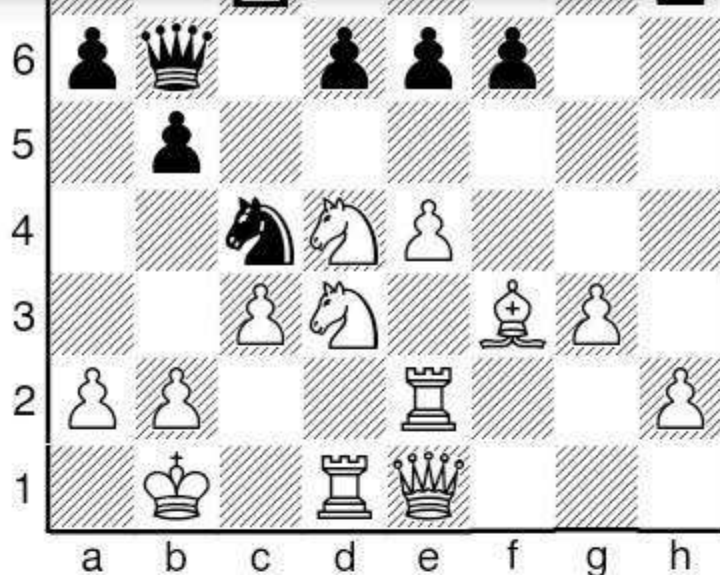


**25.♙g4 ♔b7 26.♘c2!? ♚c7 27.♙h5 ♚d8 28.♘d4 ♚e7 29.♘d3 ♔b6 30.♙f3 ♚c7?**

Finally Black slips up. He should have preferred 30...♘e5, although 31.♙g2 ♚c7 32.♘f4 ♚e7 33.♔d2± maintains the pressure; the next step will be ♔c2-b3 hitting e6.







**31. ♖f4 ♜e7**

31... ♜e8 32. ♙h5 ♜ee7 33. ♙g4±

**32. e5!±**

Dolmatov – Bluvshstein, Moscow 2004.

## Conclusion

We started by investigating 9...h6 10. ♙h4, when Black has two main ways of following up his last move. The forcing 10... ♖xe4 must be considered, but after 11. ♙e1 ♖f6 12. ♖f5 ♙a5 13. ♖xd6† ♙xd6 14. ♜xd6 White regains his pawn while keeping the dark-squared bishop as an important trump. There is also 10...g5, when my slightly unusual plan involving ♙f2 and ♖a4-b6 works a treat.

The next part of the chapter dealt with 9... ♙e7 10. ♖f3 b5 11. ♙xf6 gxf6, leading to a complex strategic battle. White's basic plan is easy to understand: he just wants to play f4-f5xe6, then bring the c3-knight to f4 and improve his pieces while putting pressure on the e6-pawn. However, we must pay close attention to what Black is doing, as one move might require us to go about our plans in a slightly different way from the next. Pay close attention to the Leko and Dolmatov games and you will get a good idea of how to handle these positions.

# Chapter 18

## Rauzer



9...b5

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6  
8.0-0-0 ♙d7 9.f4 b5 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♙b1 ♚b6 12.♘xc6 ♙xc6

13.f5

A) 13...♚c5

B) 13...h5

C) 13...0-0-0!?

A) after 17...♚c5



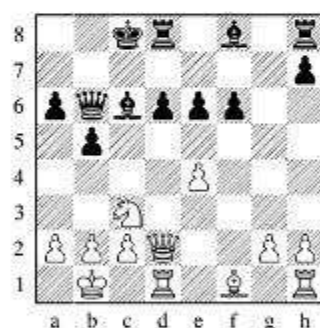
18.♘c2!N

B) after 19...♚c5



20.g3!N

C) after 14...fxc6



15.a3!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7 9.f4 b5

Black continues the natural progression of his plan with 8...♙d7.

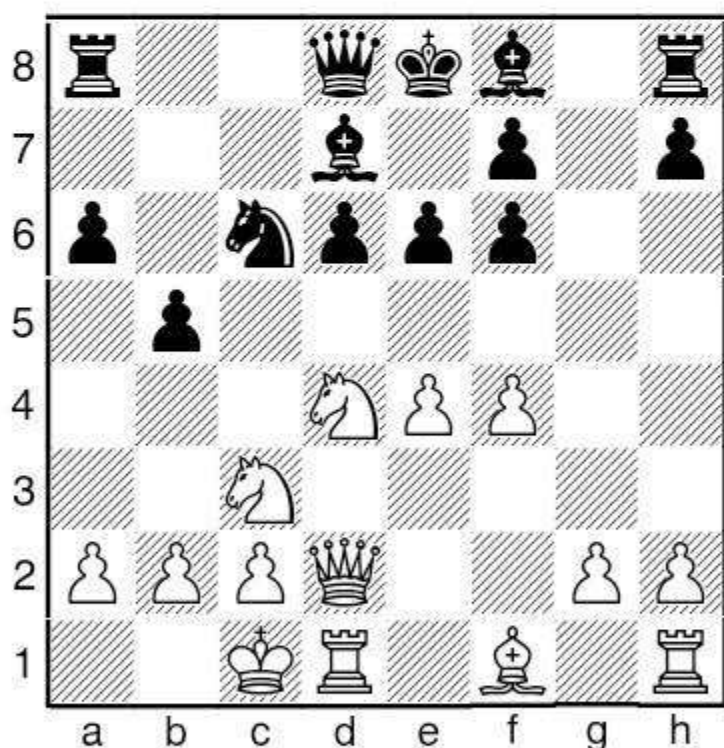
10.♙xf6 gxf6

This is forced, as 10...♚xf6? 11.e5! ends badly for Black. 11...dxe5 12.♘dxb5 ♚d8 13.♘d6† ♙xd6 14.♚xd6 exf4



15.♙xa6! ♖xa6 16.♘b5 ♖a7 17.♘xa7 ♗xa7 18.♔d4± Bashkov – Sherbakov, Chelyabinsk 1990.

This structure with doubled f-pawns can occur in various Rauzer lines, but the present variation is the most famous example of it. Black has not wasted time on moves like ...h6, and the fact that he has not yet committed his dark-squared bishop gives him some added flexibility compared with variation B of Chapter 17. One vital aspect to understand about these positions is that endgames are almost universally pleasant for Black, due to his bishop pair and extremely solid structure. White's plans usually involve pressuring the e6-pawn or finding creative ways to get to Black's king. The f4-f5 advance is key to both these objectives, and I will say more about the subsequent plans for both sides in the note to move 13 below.



## 11.♔b1

This is a useful move for many reasons, a few of which are illustrated in the following lines:

11.f5 ♗xd4 12.♔xd4 ♗h6† 13.♔b1 ♗f4! and the bishop gets to the dream e5-square.

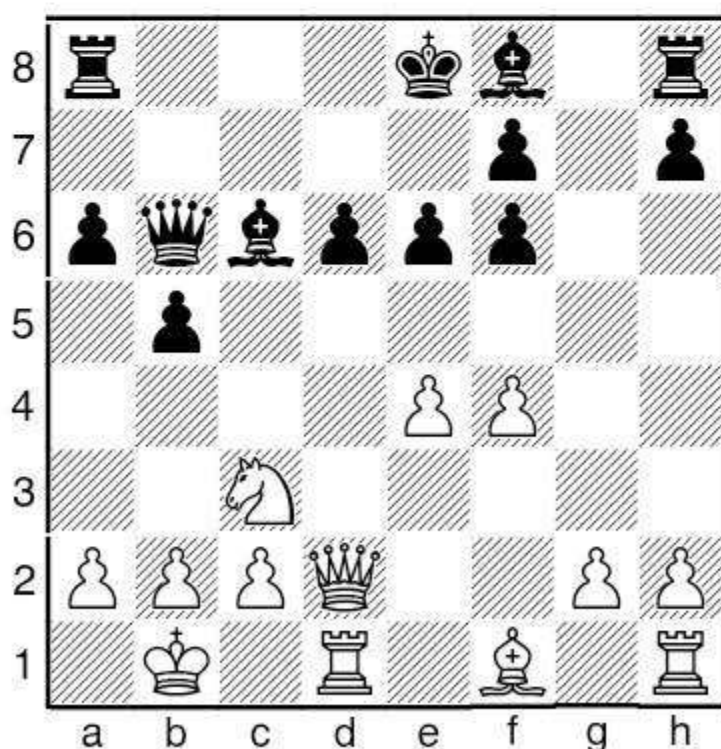
11.♘ce2 doesn't make too much sense here, but I want to remind you of Black's typical plan of exchanging queens: 11...♔a5! gives him an excellent position.

## 11...♔b6

11...b4 is also fairly popular, but 12.♘ce2 ♔b6 13.♘xc6 ♕xc6 14.f5 just transposes to a main line covered in the following chapter.

## 12.♘xc6 ♕xc6

This is an important crossroads. For a long time, 13.♔e1 was considered as the unchallenged main line. The idea is to threaten ♘d5 and provoke a concession from Black (either ...0-0-0, ...♖a7, or ...♕e7), while at the same time defending the e4-pawn. However, as we will see at the start of the next chapter, the e4-pawn isn't really in danger, and it's not clear that provoking a move like ...♕e7 is really an achievement. Black has managed to obtain sufficient counterplay in various lines there, so we will shift our focus to the following move, which I consider more critical.



## 13.f5

Given the chance, White will exchange on e6 and target



the weakness with ♖e2-f4. In an ideal world he will increase the pressure with g2-g3 and ♕h3, although quite often he has to settle for developing the bishop on d3, at least in the short term, to guard the e4-pawn and generally stabilize the position. In some variations White utilizes the alternative plan of ♖e2, c2-c3 and ♖d4, with similar ideas in mind.

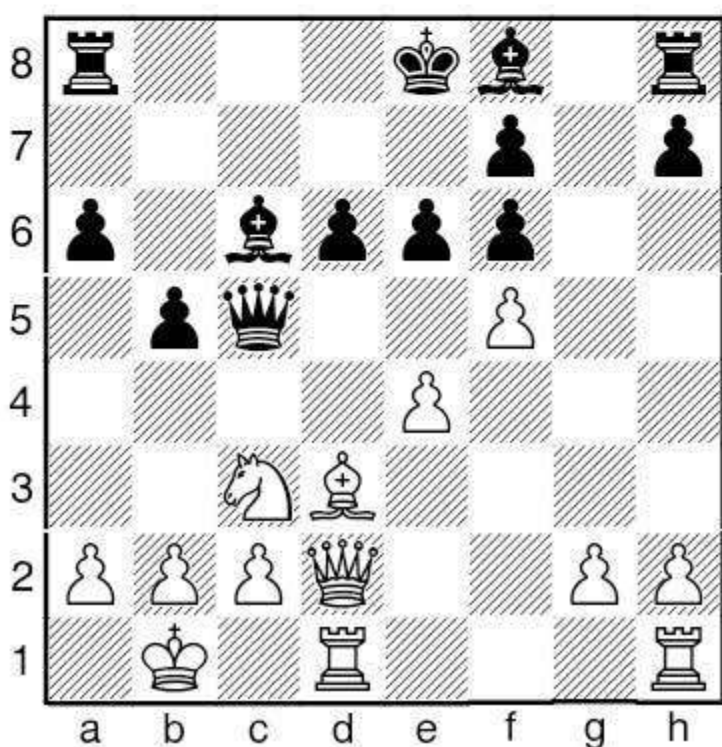
In this chapter we will see what happens when Black allows us to exchange on e6, the three main options being **A)** 13...♙c5, **B)** 13...h5 and **C)** 13...0-0-0!?

The main line is 13...b4 (to remove the c3-knight, so ♖d5 won't be an issue), intending 14.♖e2 e5 with a blocked centre. This will be covered in the next chapter.

14...♕xe4? is mentioned as bad by Kozul & Jankovic, with the following refutation: 15.♖g3 ♕b7 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♙f4! ♕e7 18.♕e2 d5 (18...0-0-0 19.♙c4†!±) 19.♖he1 e5 20.♙g4 and White is close to winning.

### A) 13...♙c5 14.♕d3

14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♕d3 may well transpose, but we do not have to hurry to exchange on e6, as blocking the centre does not work so well for Black with the queen on c5.





## 14...h5

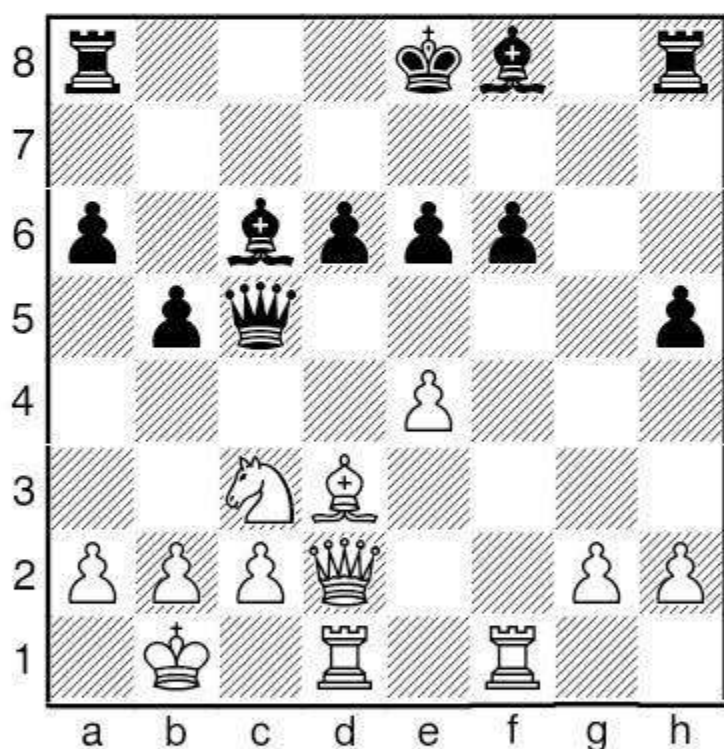
14...b4 15.♘e2 e5 has been played several times, but after 16.c3! Black's queen proves to be misplaced.

## 15.fxe6

This straightforward move works well, although 15.♙e1!? b4 (15...♙e7 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♘e2±) 16.♘d5!? ♙xd5 17.exd5 e5 18.♙e2 a5 19.♙b5† ♔e7 20.♙c6 was also pleasant for White in J. Geller – Voitsekhovsky, Kazan 2009.

## 15...fxe6 16.♗hf1

16.e5!? is interesting, but after 16...fxe5 17.♘e4 ♙xe4 18.♙xe4 ♖c8 the position was challenging for both sides in Kanmazalp – Jankovic, Skopje 2013. There is no need for us to go for such a double-edged game.



## 16...♙h6

16...♙e7 is too passive, and White keeps an easy edge with the standard 17.♘e2.

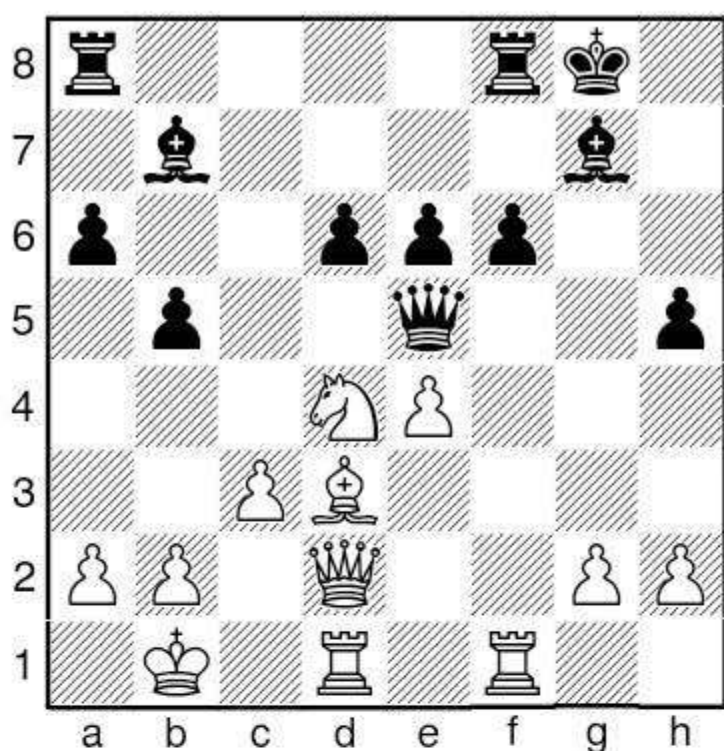
16...♙g7 17.♘e2 (The hasty 17.e5?! f5 18.exd6 0-0-0 gave Black a great position in Vujakovic – Kozul, Pula 2001)

17...♙e5 18.c3 0-0 19.♘d4 (19.♘f4 is also good) 19...♙b7

White is better after any sensible move, but in the following



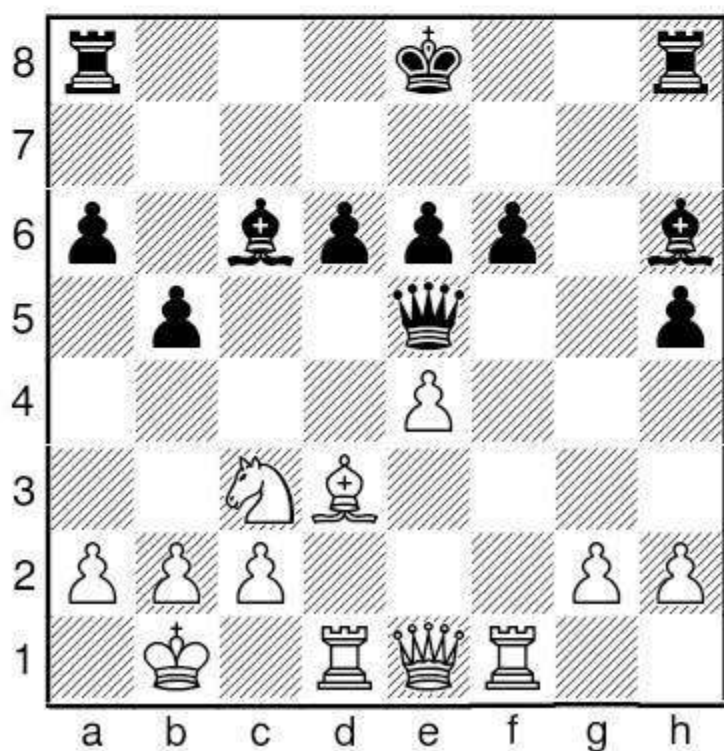
correspondence game he went straight for the kill:



20.g4! hxg4 21.♖f4 Black was unable to cope with the kingside threats in Llorach Gracia – Gimeno Diaz, email 2009.

## 17.♙e1 ♙e5

In C.K. Pedersen – Kristiansen, Denmark 2012, White could have kept a pleasant edge by carrying out our thematic plan.



## 18. ♖e2!N

18.g3 is less accurate due to 18... ♖g7!, when 19. ♖e2 allows 19... f5.

## 18... ♖e3

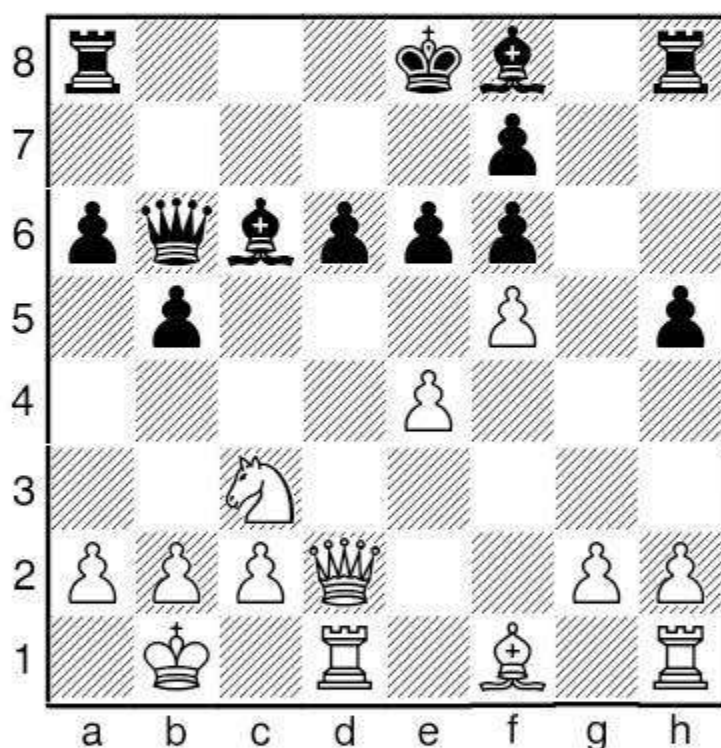
18... ♖xe4? 19. ♖xe4 ♔xe4 20. ♖xd6 leaves Black far too exposed.

18... ♖g7 19.c3± keeps everything under control.

## 19.g3±

Followed by ♖f4.

## B) 13...h5



This is Houdini's first choice, but I consider it an empty move; ... ♖h6 is not really an idea for now, and the h5-pawn may be exploited as a weakness in the future.

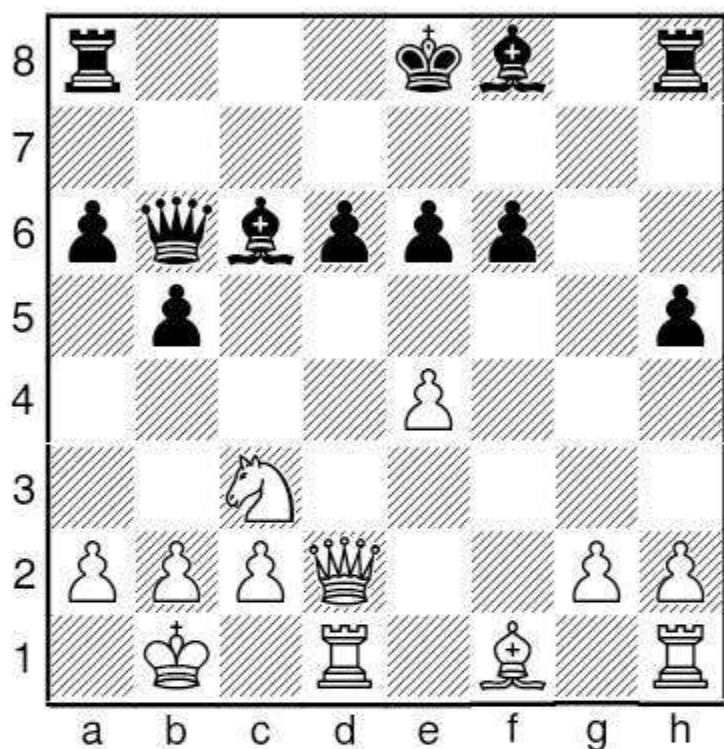
## 14.fxe6

White can even switch plans with 14. ♔e1!? since, compared to 13. ♔e1 lines, the ...h5 move is a waste of time compared to Black's most efficient responses. Still, I don't see any need to deviate from our normal plan.



## 14...fxe6

This structure used to be considered fully acceptable for Black, possibly because of the aesthetic aspect of not having doubled pawns. However, players have come to realize that such positions are actually quite unpleasant to play for Black if White just follows the simple plan of  $\text{♙d3}$ ,  $\text{♞e2-f4}$ ,  $\text{♖hf1}$  and so on. Of course Black has some temporary activity with  $\text{...♞h6}$ , but I don't see how he can generate any real counterplay from that.

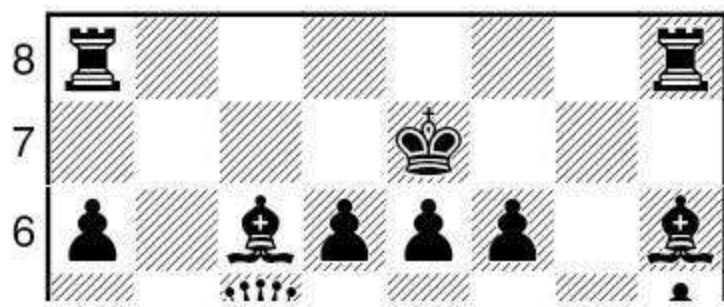


## 15.♞d3

White used to play mostly  $15.\text{♞f4}$  but this seems too greedy. Instead we will keep that square reserved for the knight.

## 15...♞h6

$15...\text{b4}$  doesn't help Black at all.  $16.\text{♞e2 ♞c5}$  ( $16...\text{a5}$   $17.\text{♞c4±}$ )  $17.\text{♞e1 ♞h6}$   $18.\text{♖f1 ♞e7}$



19.g3! (19.♘f4 ♙xf4 20.♖xf4 may slightly favour White, but Black's queen will find a stable home on e5, so Caruana prepares to recapture with the pawn if needed) 19...a5 20.♘f4 ♙e8 21.b3 ♙g7 22.♙c4± Caruana – Boros, Budapest 2007.

## 16.♙e1 ♙e3

16...♙f7? feels too shady, and 17.♖f1 ♙c5 18.♘d5! exd5 19.e5 gives White a huge attack.

16...0-0-0 17.♖f1 ♖hf8 18.♘e2± reaches another typical situation with relatively easy play for White; the plan of c2-c3 and ♘d4 looks especially tempting.

## 17.♘e2!

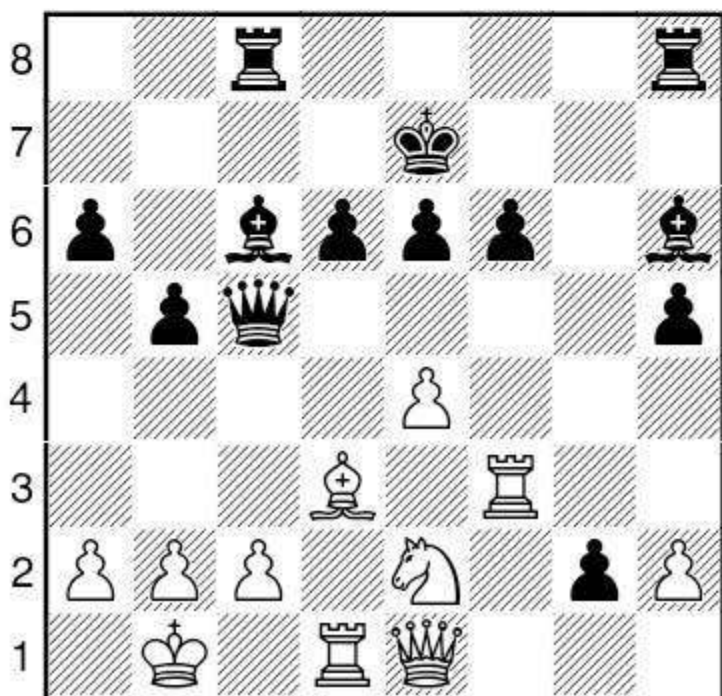
Obviously we should avoid the queen exchange. The black queen might look annoying, but it can be expelled with ♖f1-f3.

## 17...♙e7

17...♙xe4? 18.♙xe4 ♙xe4 19.♖xd6± is a bad trade for Black.

## 18.♖f1 ♖ac8 19.♖f3 ♙c5

Now White has a pleasant choice.





## 20.g3!?N

Utilizing the same idea as in the Caruana game noted above.

20.♘f4 ♕xf4 (20...♖e8 21.e5 ♔xe5 22.♘xe6!±) 21.♖xf4 ♖cg8 has occurred in one engine game, which was eventually drawn. With no bishop pair to worry about, it should be preferable for White, although it will not be easy to break through. 22.♖d2N± looks like a sensible way to start.

## 20...♖b7

After 20...♖hg8 21.♘f4 ♕xf4 22.gxf4± the change in the structure makes Black's position harder to defend.

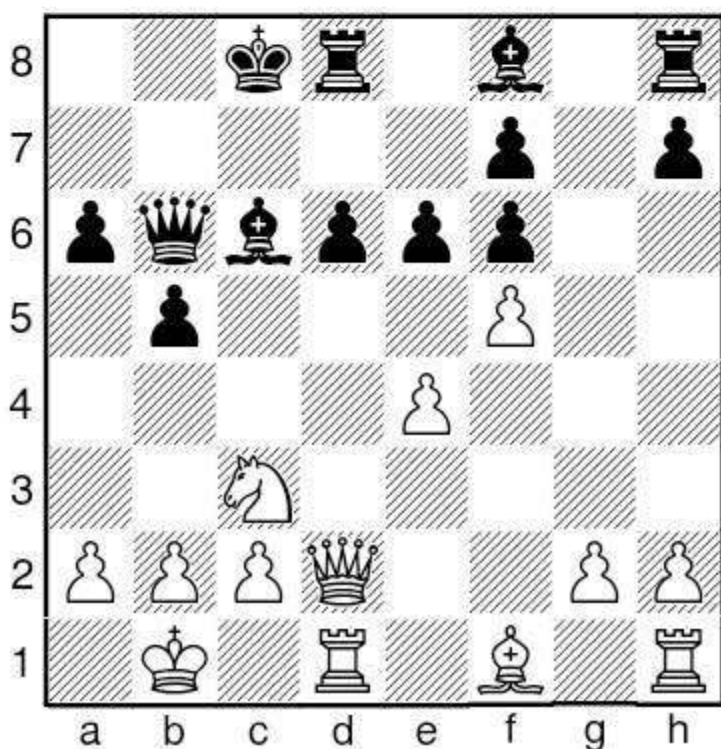
## 21.♘f4 ♖hg8

21...♕xf4 22.gxf4±

## 22.♔f1 ♔e5 23.♖e1±

White has a pleasant position, which can be strengthened with c2-c3 and an eventual bishop transfer to b3. Black also faces the more immediate worry of a trick involving ♘d5†.

## C) 13...0-0-0!?



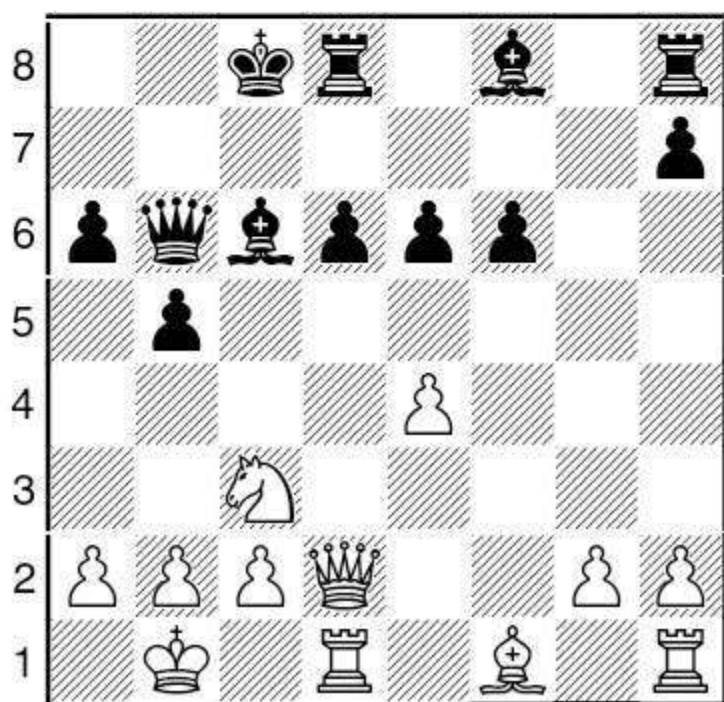
So far this has been almost exclusively a correspondence concept, although a few strong players have used it over the board. Still, these days one must take these obscure computer-dependent lines seriously. In this particular case, Black has a concrete idea of playing ...d5 to open the game for his bishops.

### 14.fxe6!

At first glance ...d5 may not look like a big threat, but after 14.♔d3 d5 15.exd5 exd5! there are several games showing that Black's bishops give him great play. Exchanging on e6 makes the ...d5 possibility less appealing for him, although we should still be on guard against it.

### 14...fxe6

As we have seen in the earlier lines, this structure should favour White as long as he can get properly coordinated and prevent any quick counterplay. Ideally we would like to play g2-g3 and ♔h3, but we have to be careful about ...f5. Therefore we should also keep in mind slower plans involving ♔d3, ♖hf1 and ♘e2-f4, or ♔e2, ♖hf1/e1 and ♔g4. Interestingly, the choice will depend on how Black proceeds on the next move. I have therefore decided to strengthen our position with a preventative measure on the queenside before deciding how to arrange the other pieces.





## 15.a3!N

I am not so satisfied with our typical plan: 15.♗d3 ♔b8 16.♖hf1 (16.♘e2 d5!? is similar) 16...♙e7 17.♘e2 The problem with playing this too quickly is that Black gets to open the game for his bishops: 17...d5! 18.exd5 In Akopian – Ivanchuk, Warsaw 2003, 18...♙xd5!N 19.♘f4 ♙b7 would have left Black with slightly better chances thanks to his strong bishops.

By stabilizing the knight on c3, White prepares to play g2-g3 if given the chance.

## 15...♙g7

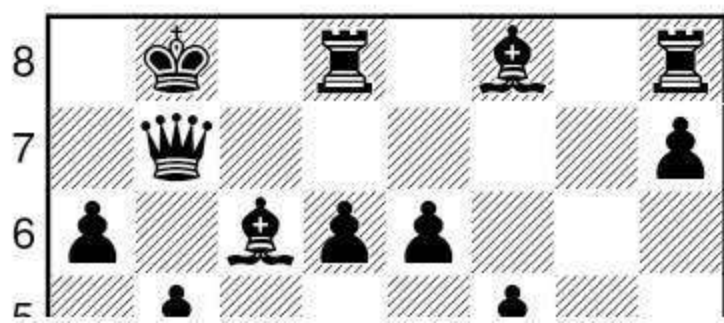
This slightly tricky move forces us to adjust our plans. Here are some lines showing how you can play against other likely moves:

15...a5?! 16.♔d4! leaves Black too exposed on the queenside.

15...♙e7 16.g3 gives us our ideal set-up.

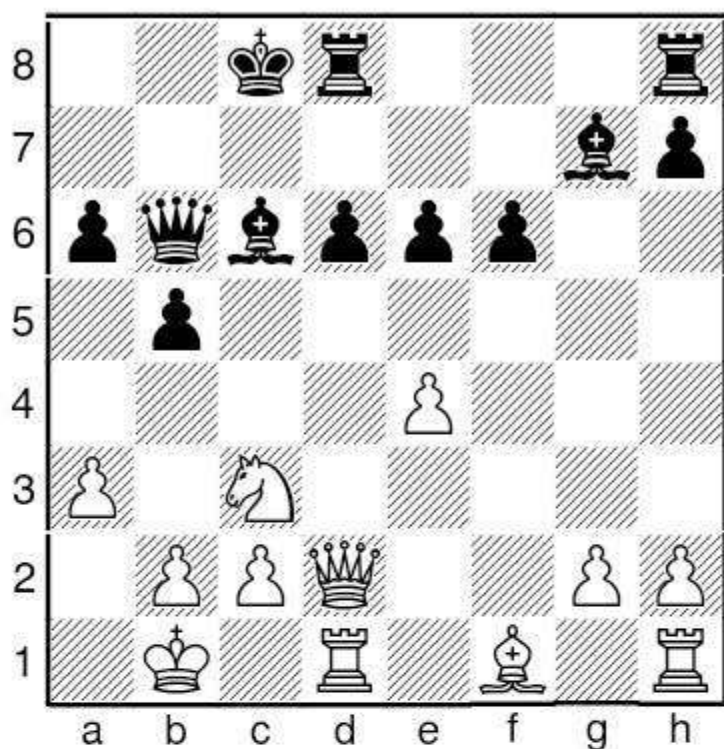
15...d5 16.exd5 exd5 17.♘a2! shows another use of the a2-a3 move. White is well placed to exploit Black's pawn weaknesses while keeping the bishops under control.

15...♔b8 16.g3!? (16.♙e2 and 16.♙d3 are perfectly possible, although the main line shows that Black's bishop might be better placed on f8 than g7 in some scenarios. This is not necessarily a big problem for White, but 16.g3 just feels more natural to me.) 16...f5 17.♙g2 ♔b7 If Black didn't have this, his position would be collapsing, which isn't a good sign for him. Even after the text move, his position feels somewhat overextended.





18.♖hg1!? (There is also 18.♖he1 ♗g7 19.♘a2!? ♗xe4 20.♗xe4 fxe4 21.♙f4, regaining the pawn with pressure against Black's centre) 18...fxe4 19.♙e3 White regains the pawn and Black's pawn centre remains a clear target.



### 16.♗d3!

Black is ready to meet 16.g3 with 16...f5!, which is why I recommend a slight change of plan.

16.♗e2!? also deserves serious attention, with the idea of posting the bishop on g4 at some point. However, I would instinctively prefer the move that restrains Black's potential counterplay, particularly with ...f5.

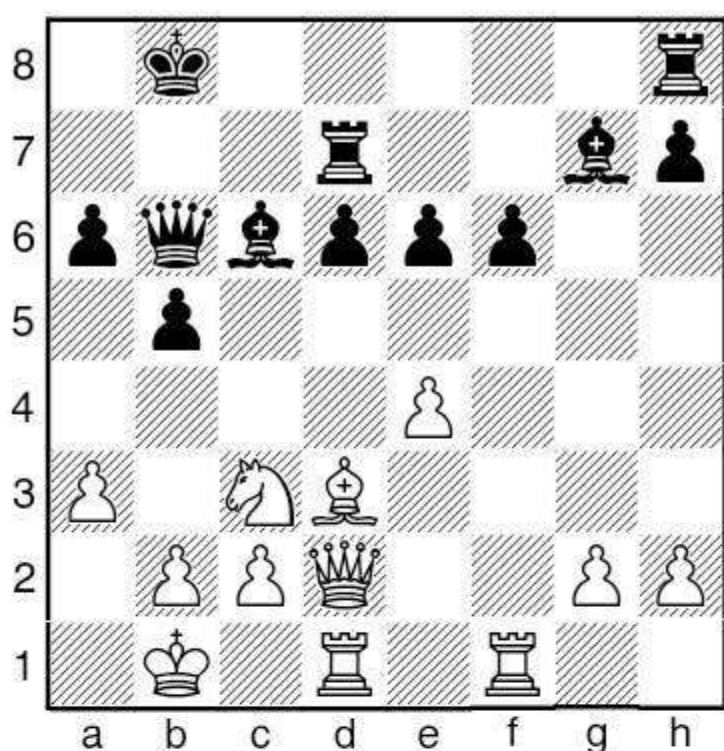
The text move prepares the typical plan of ♖hf1 and ♘e2-f4, although in some cases the knight may go d4. If Black just waits passively, then White can regroup the other pieces with moves like c2-c3, ♗c2-b3 and ♙e2-h5. The major concern is to avoid being caught with a quick ...d5 or ...f5.

### 16...♙b8 17.♖hf1 ♗d7

17...♖he8 18.♘e2 d5 does not work, as 19.exd5 ♗xd5 20.♘f4 ♗b7 21.♘h5± shows one of the drawbacks of putting the bishop on g7.



17...♔c5 18.♘e2 ♚e5 19.♚a5! ♙b7 20.c3± is also unpleasant for Black.



## 18.♘e2 d5!?

This seems like the best chance. Neutral moves such as 18...♖c8 give White everything he wants after 19.♘f4±.

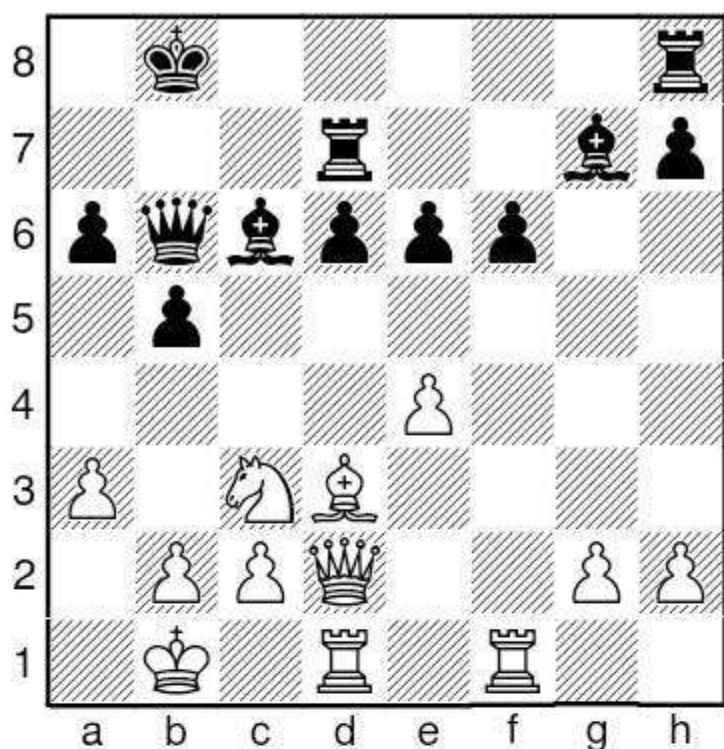
## 19.exd5 ♙xd5 20.♘f4±

Black's kingside pawns are loose and his exposed king will be a factor for a long time to come.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced one of the most iconic variations of the Rauzer, in which Black takes on doubled f-pawns, trusting in the solidity of his pawn wall and the long-term power of the bishop pair. We have seen that the direct plan of f4-f5, followed by – if Black allows it – fxe6, gives White good chances to develop sustained pressure against Black's loose pawns, not to mention his perennially unsafe king. Variations A and B mostly feature natural, obvious moves by White. On the other hand, the final option of 13...0-0-0!? is rather tricky, although if White plays precisely over the next few moves he will once again have

for Black.



### 18. ♖e2 d5!?

This seems like the best chance. Neutral moves such as 18... ♖c8 give White everything he wants after 19. ♖f4±.

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## Conclusion

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# Chapter 19

## Rauzer



13...b4

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0  
 ♙d7 9.f4 b5 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♖b1 ♚b6 12.♘xc6 ♙xc6 13.f5 b4 14.♘e2 e5  
 15.♘g3

A) 15...h5 16.h4

A1) 16...♙h6!?

A2) 16...♚c5 17.♚e2!? ♖e7!? 18.♘xh5 ♙b5 19.♚g4  
 ♙h6 20.♜d5! ♚c7 21.♚d1 ♙c6 22.♙c4

A21) 22...♙xd5

A22) 22...♜ac8 23.♘xf6!N ♖xf6 24.♜xd6†

A221) 24...♖e7

A222) 24...♖g7

B) 15...♚c5!

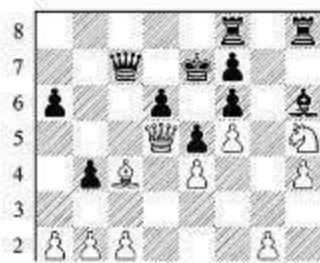
B1) 16.♘h5

B2) 16.♙d3!?

B21) 16...a5

B22) 16...h5

A21) after 23...♜af8



A22) after 22...♜ac8



B22) after 21.♜g1!



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6  
 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7 9.f4 b5 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♚b1 ♚b6  
 12.♘xc6 ♙xc6 13.f5 b4

After witnessing Black's problems in the previous chapter, it is easy to see why this is the main line. Black prepares to block the centre, ensuring that he will never have to worry about fxe6.

#### 14.♘e2 e5

Grabbing the e-pawn is not really a serious option:

14...♙xe4?!

This wastes valuable time and opens up the centre and light squares for us.

#### 15.♘g3

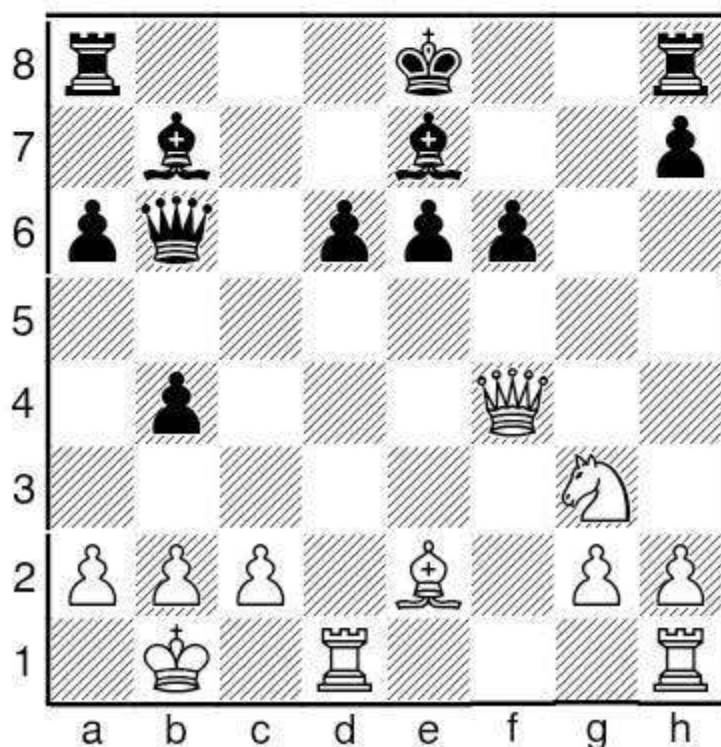
This seems simplest, although White can also consider 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♚f4, which brought Naiditsch a nice win against Kozul.

15...♙b7

15...♙c6N 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♙c4 d5 18.♖he1! gives White a huge initiative.

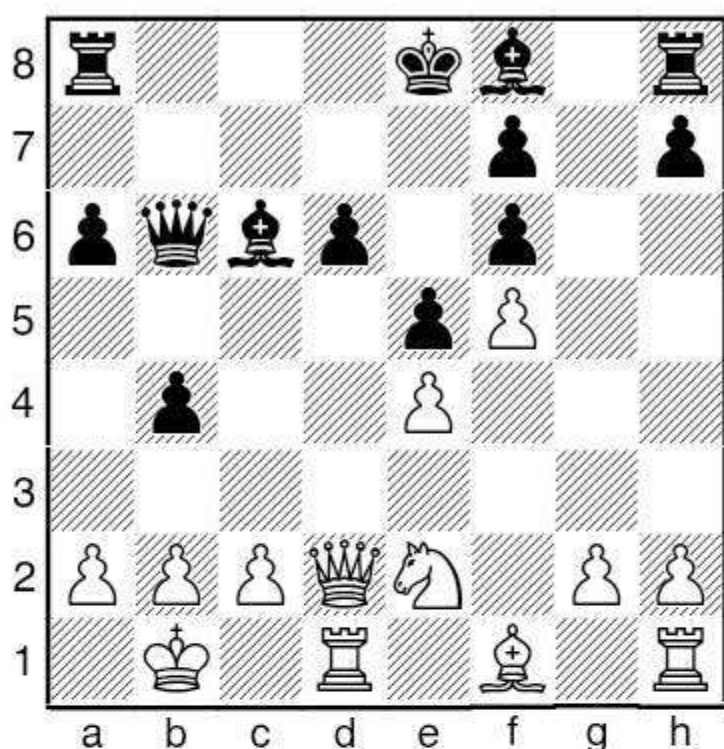
15...♙d5 16.♘h5 ♚e7 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♘f4± Swinkels – Pliester, Amsterdam 2006.

16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♚f4 ♙e7 18.♙e2





Black was under unpleasant pressure in Morozov – Gibbons, email 2007, since the desirable 18...0-0-0 would have run into 19.♔c4†!±.



This solid move avoids the positions with fxe6 and stunts the prospects of the white knight. Obviously the d5-square is a gaping hole, but it is not easy for White to exploit it. If we had unlimited time than it would be great to manoeuvre the knight to e3 and bishop to c4, but in reality this will rarely be possible. Instead we will try to create inroads on the kingside with ♘g3-h5. If Black prevents this by playing ...h5, the h-pawn becomes a target for us. In the long run Black's kingside is almost certainly doomed, but it will take White a lot of time to achieve that. This gives Black the opportunity to create powerful counterplay on the queenside with ...a5-a4 and ...b3 (or ...a3), or in the centre with ...d5. So White needs to progress his own attack while limiting Black's counterplay as much as possible. Of course we must also be on the lookout for Black's possible plan of exchanging queens; in some cases he is even willing to sacrifice a pawn to get to an endgame.

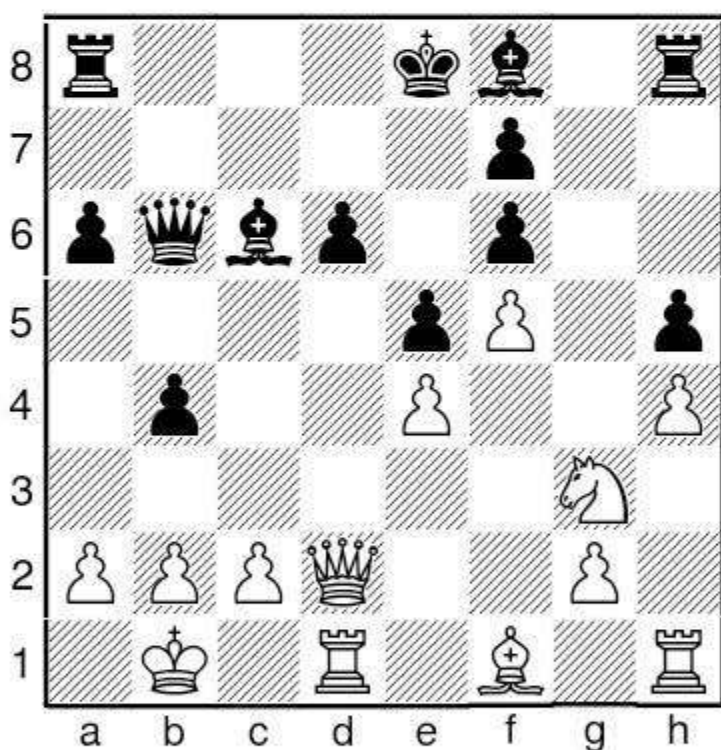
15.♘g3

Already we have reached a critical juncture. Allowing  $\text{h5}$  seems worrying, so we will start by analysing **A) 15...h5**, before turning to the more critical **B) 15...c5!**.

### A) 15...h5 16.h4

Preventing ...h4 and making the h5-pawn a static target.

16.g4 has brought White a few nice wins recently, but Black's play can be improved: 16...c5!N (16...h4 17.f1 xe4 18.e2! is White's idea, when he sacrifices two pawns but achieves total domination over the light squares after e3) 17.gd5 (Also after 17.e2 h4 18.f1 h6 Black seems to be doing rather well) 17...c8 18.xc6† xc6 White's knight is too far away from d5, and Black will have good prospects after ...h6, ...e7 and so on.



Black has two main continuations: the risky but playable **A1) 16...h6!?** and the more solid **A2) 16...c5**.

Other moves such as 16...a5 would allow White to gain full control with 17.g4 followed by e2.

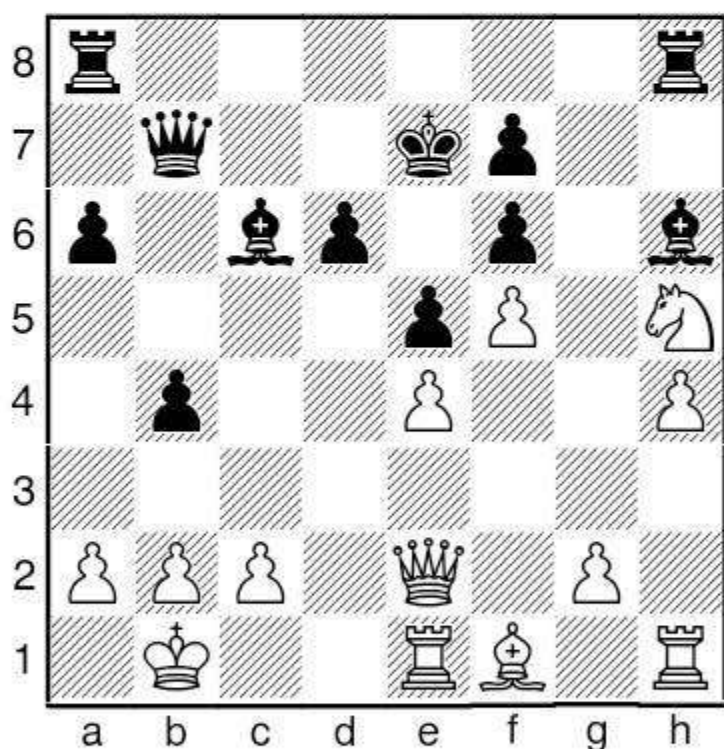
### A1) 16...h6!?



This move has been surprisingly underestimated. Black sacrifices at least one and usually two pawns for the chance to go into an endgame. Of course he would like to exchange queens but are two pawns really worth it? Initially, practical tests seemed to indicate that White had winning chances without any risk, but then the correspondence players took over and came up with more powerful, counter-intuitive methods that made full use of the power of the bishops. We must therefore be more creative than just following the games.

## 17. ♔xd6

17. ♔e2 misplaces the queen since Black has not yet committed to ... ♔c5. A good reply is 17... ♔e7 18. ♘xh5 ♔b7! when the e4-pawn should eventually fall. 19. ♖e1 (19. ♖h3 ♙xe4 20. ♖e1 d5 21. ♘g3 ♜ad8 22. ♘xe4 dxe4=)



19...b3!! This works because White's pieces are so far away from the queenside. 20.cxb3 (20.axb3 a5 gives Black a strong initiative) 20... ♖hc8 21. ♘g3 Black has good play after 21...a5 or 21... ♔b4!?

17... ♖d8 18. ♔xd8 ♔xd8 19. ♖xd8 ♔xd8



## 20. ♖xa6!

Usually White has captured on h5, but this pawn might well fall anyway, so it's useful to bank another queenside pawn before Black has time for ...a5. This has only played in a single correspondence game in 2007. I guess most players rejected it because ...♖g8 looks worrying, but on closer inspection Black doesn't actually get too much activity.

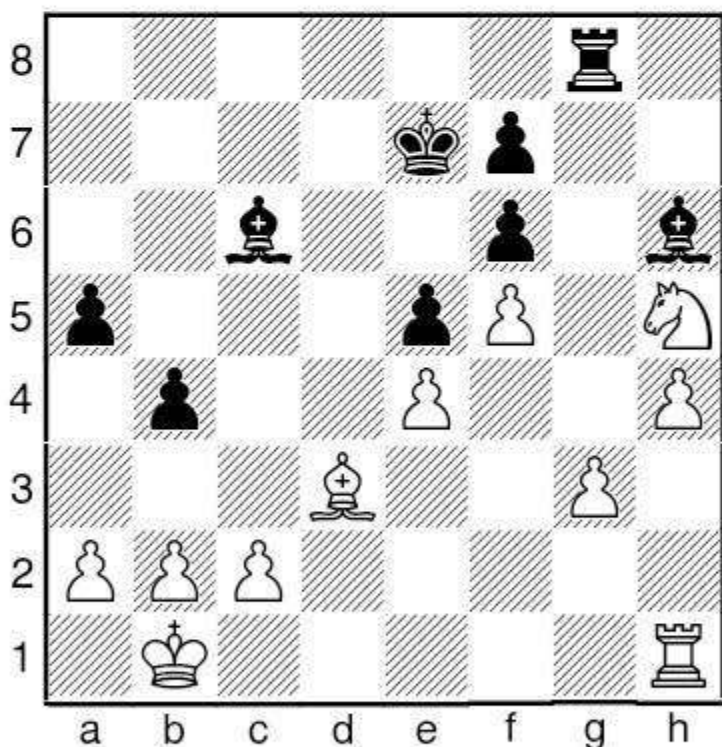
It is worth checking the alternative of course:

20. ♖xh5 ♔e7 21. ♕d3 ♖g8!?

Despite being two pawns down, Black can try to hold an extremely computeresque way.

21... ♕e3 is not such a problem for us: 22. ♖g3! ♖g8 (22... ♕f2 23. ♖f1 ♖xh4 24. ♖xh4 ♕xh4 25. g3 ♕g5 26. c3 bxc3 27. b3!± Haba – Skliba, Ostrava 2010.) 23. ♖f1 ♕h6 24. ♖g1± Saric – Jankovic, Bol 2014.

22. g3 a5



23. b3!?N

Improving over 23. ♖g1 a4 24. g4 ♕e3 25. ♖g2 a3 26. b3 ♖h8 and somehow White found it really hard to improve in Kristjansson – Yeremenko, email 2011.

23... ♕d2!?

23... a4 24. a3!± helps White.

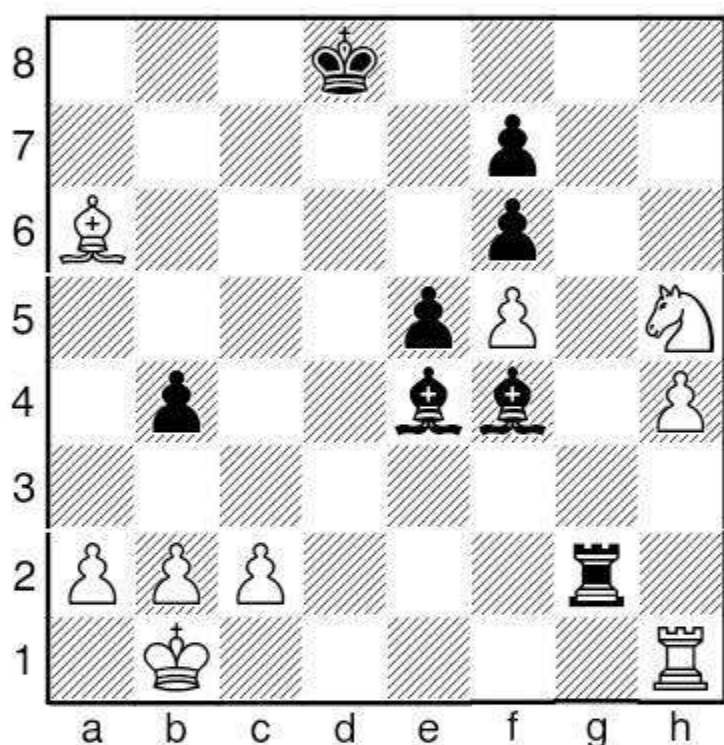


After the text move the question is whether White has any meaningful ways to improve his position. The computer doesn't seem to think so, although I can't help feeling sceptical about Black's entire scheme. However, it's a moot point as I think 20.♙f4! is just a stronger move.

## 20...♚e7!?

After 20...♙f4 21.♖h3 Black has nothing better than 21...♖g8 transposing to 20...♖g8 below.

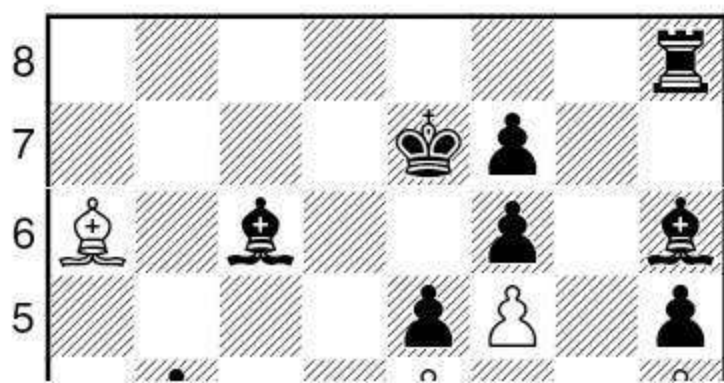
20...♖g8 21.♖h3 ♙f4 (21...♖g4 22.a3±) 22.♘h5 ♖xg2 23.♖h1 ♙xe4



24.♙d3! Forcing the exchange of one of Black's bishops.

24...♙xd3 (24...♙c6 25.♘xf4 exf4 26.♚c1±) 25.cxd3 ♙e3

26.♘xf6 ♙d4 27.b3 ♖b2† 28.♚c1 ♖xa2 29.♖h3!± It's possible to analyse this endgame further, but it seems clear that Black is struggling for a draw.



## 21. ♖h3

21. ♖d3 should lead to the same position.

## 21... ♜g8

21... ♜d8? is pointless after 22. ♖d3±.

## 22. ♖d3 ♖d2

22... ♖e3 23. ♘h5 (23. ♘f1!? is similar to the main line below) 23... ♜xg2 24. c3! is unpleasant for Black.

## 23. ♘f1!

After 23. a3 ♖e1 24. ♘h5 bxa3 25. bxa3 ♜xg2 it is hard for White to improve, as his knight has nowhere to go.

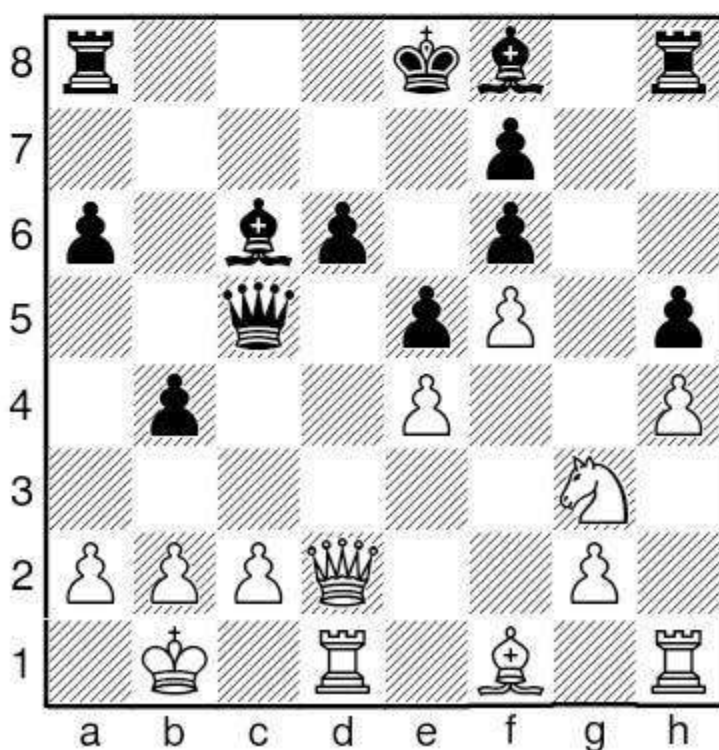
## 23... ♖h6 24. ♘e3!

24. a3!? bxa3 25. b4 also makes some sense, but the plan is even more effective after getting rid of the dark-squared bishop.

## 24... ♖xe3 25. ♜xe3 ♜xg2 26. a3 bxa3 27. b4!

White's potential on the queenside clearly exceeds Black's chances with the single passed h-pawn.

## A2) 16... ♔c5





This is the more common option, and it immediately presents us with a critical choice.

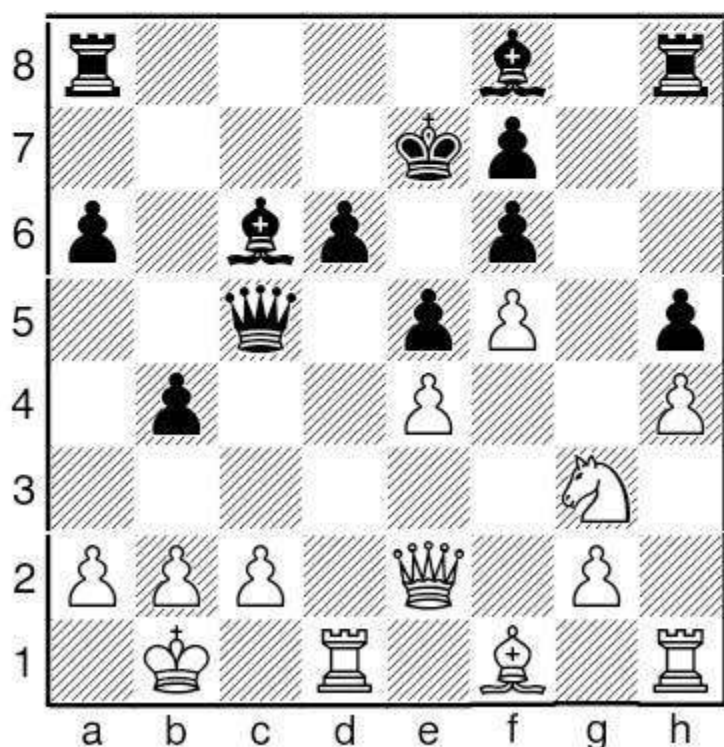
### 17. ♔e2!?

17. ♖d3 is a perfectly sensible alternative which is analysed later via the move order 15... ♔c5! 16. ♖d3 h5 17. h4 – see variation B22. You could therefore skip the rest of this section and just go for the ♖d3 set-up in both places, but it is tempting to try and punish Black for giving us the extra option. Although both lines are quite promising for White, I think it is worth the extra effort to study the present section – especially as I found a strong improvement which takes the play in a radical new direction.

### 17... ♔e7!?

This looks rather unusual, but it's based on some concrete ideas. Black needs to come up with something, otherwise his position will quickly collapse after ♖xh5.

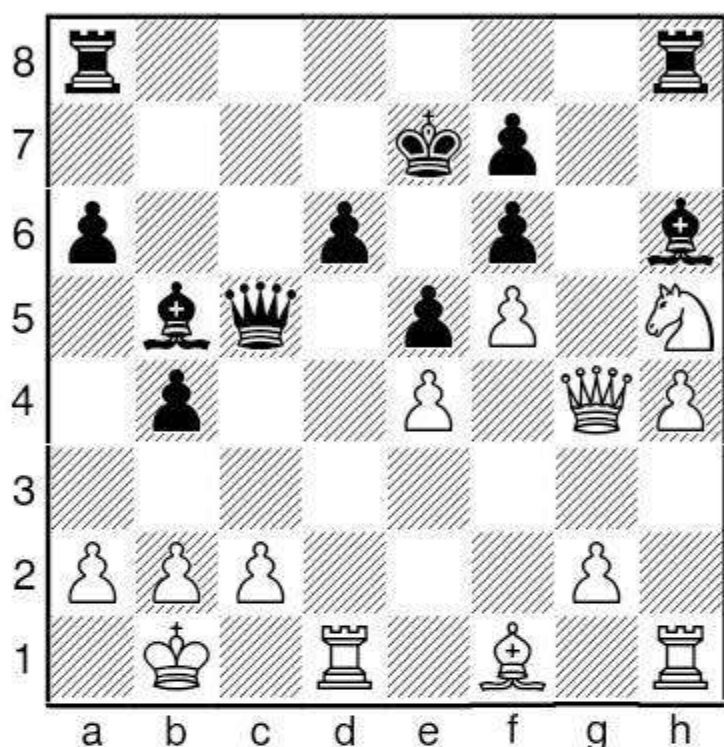
After 17... ♖b5 18. ♔f3 ♖c8 19. ♖xb5† axb5 20. ♔e2± the exchange of light-squared bishops clearly favoured White in Poetsch – Hoffmann, Dortmund 2013.



18. ♖xh5 ♖b5 19. ♔g4 ♖h6

It is quite typical of this line that the bishop somehow springs from the dead to become a potent force on h6. Suddenly it controls the c1-square, and the c2-pawn is in real danger.

19...♖c8? allows 20.♙xb5! when ...♔xc2† isn't actually a threat.



## 20.♖d5!

After 20.♙xb5? axb5 the ...♔a7xa2 mating threats are coming.

20.♙d3 is playable, but 20...♙c6! 21.♔e2 ♔e3 reaches an incredible transposition to variation B22, where the move order is 15...♔c5! 16.♙d3 h5 17.h4 ♙h6 18.♔e2 ♔e3 19.♙xh5 ♔e7. The ...♙b5-c6 and ♔g4-e2 moves have cancelled each other out; see page 281 for the continuation.

## 20...♔c7

In the stem game in this line Dubov played 20...♔e3?! but was swiftly punished: 21.♔d1 ♔xe4 22.♙xb5 axb5 23.♖xd6 ♖ad8



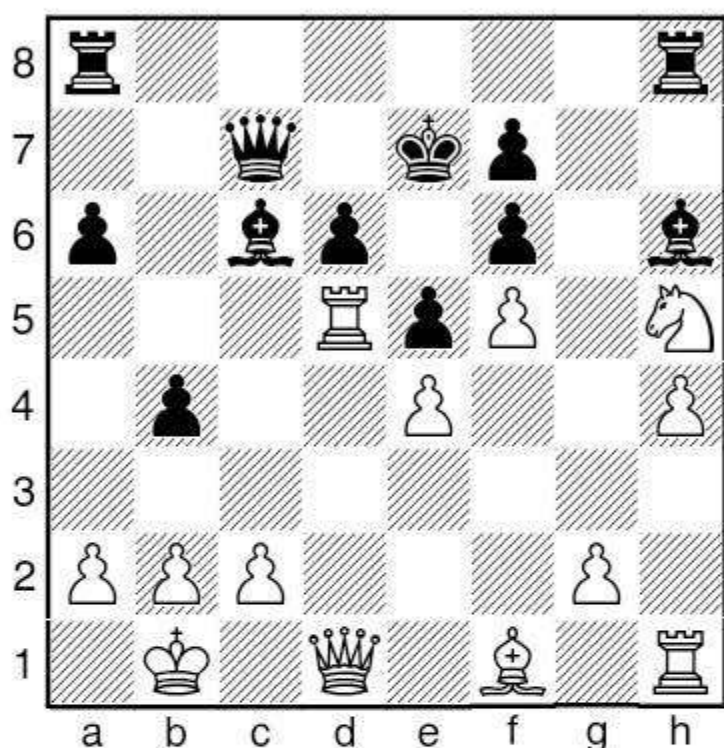


24.♖d7†! ♜xd7 25.♔xd7† ♚xd7 26.♜xf6†± Alekseev – Dubov, Tyumen 2012.

The text move is Dobov's improvement; he introduced it just a few months later against Svidler, and repeated it in 2015.

## 21.♔d1 ♜c6

Nothing else makes any sense.



## 22.♜c4

We seem to be really deep into theory, but it's not as bad as it seems. Actually, if Black opts for 16...♔c5 (instead of 16...♜h6), White can reach this position almost by force. I noticed that several strong players deviated for White (generally with 20.♜d3), while Black seemed quite willing to play the present position. I therefore needed to work hard to figure out what's really going on in this strange position.

We will analyse **A21)** 22...♜xd5N followed by the more likely continuation of **A22)** 22...♖ac8.

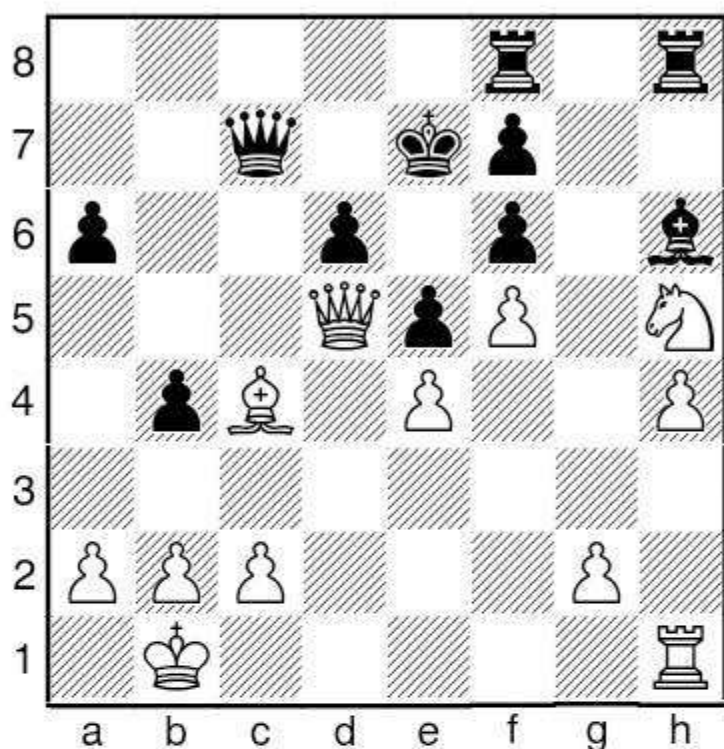
### **A21) 22...♜xd5N 23.♔xd5**

Even though this hasn't been played before, it's the first

obvious thing to look at. Obviously White gets absolute control over the light squares, but how does he utilize it?

## 23...♖af8

23...♖hf8 24.g4 ♖ac8 25.♙b3 ♙e3 26.♚d1 ♖h8 27.g5 fxg5 28.f6† ♚d8 29.♘g7 gxh4 30.♘f5 looks extremely unpleasant for Black.



## 24.a4!!

Maybe the double exclamation marks are an exaggeration but I find the idea really beautiful. Actually, the point of this move is not at all obvious at first. The key thing to note is that the b4-pawn was completely crippling our queenside. Neither a2-a3 nor c2-c3 is any good, and b2-b3 permanently weakens the dark squares. White also has to take into account the threat of future counterplay with ...a5-a4-a3, as well as potential back-rank problems. The next, crucial, thing to realize is that taking en passant leads to serious problems for Black, as mentioned in the next note. After the text move, White's king is safer and his king has a route into the game via a2 and b3 in a future endgame.

The problem with 24.a3? is 24...♙e3!, hitting the knight



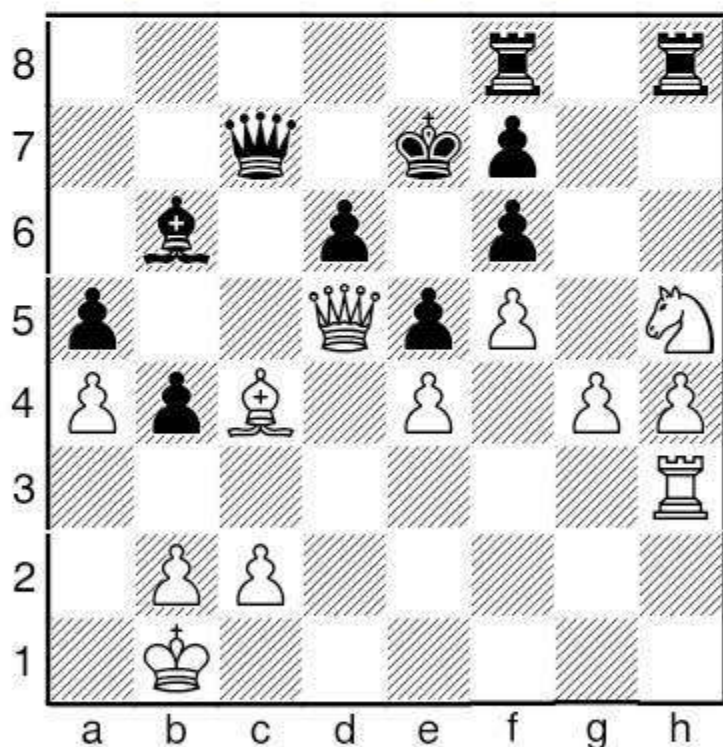
while threatening ...bxa3.

The most obvious try is the greedy 24.♙xa6 ♖fg8 25.♙c4 ♖h7 26.g3 ♙e3, but it doesn't seem easy for White to make further progress. The knight on h5 is particularly off bounds, and the queenside pawns don't seem to be worth much. Still, White is certainly not risking anything, and in a practical game one could keep looking for ways to improve – but the main line just seems nicer to me.

## 24...♖hg8

24...bxa3 25.♖h3!± is a key detail. The threat of ♖b3-b7 means that Black does not have time to take on b2, so White keeps his structure intact while the a6-pawn becomes a target.

24...♙e3? is a mistake, as the bishop is needed to defend the kingside: 25.g4 a5 (25...♖hg8 26.g5!→) 26.♖h3! ♙b6



27.♘xf6! ♙xf6 28.g5† ♙e7 (28...♙g7 29.h5 is picturesque!) 29.g6 White has a crushing attack – and note the importance of the escape square on a2!

## 25.g3 a5

25...♙e3 26.♙xa6±

## 26.♖e1!

Complete domination. Black has hardly any moves available, while White can continue improving his position as you will see.

## 26...♗d2

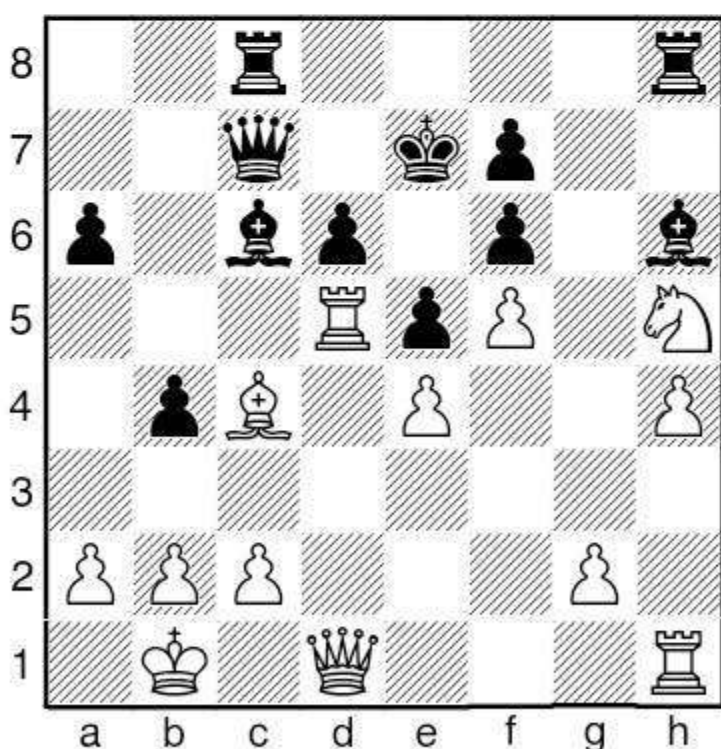
This does not accomplish anything, but I just want to add a few moves to show how White can make progress.

Moves such as 26...♖g4 and 26...♑b6 can be met by 27.♔a2 with similar ideas as below.

## 27.♖e2 ♗h6 28.♔a2 ♕d7 29.♗b3±

Now 29...♑c7? would lose to 30.c3! followed by ♖c2. Black can avoid an immediate disaster with 29...♑a7, but it's obvious that he is hanging by a thread. White can try to regroup the rook or queen, or prepare c2-c3 at a suitable moment.

### A22) 22...♖ac8



This has been played in all the games so far, but I found a new idea which completely changes the landscape of the game.



## 23. ♖xf6! N

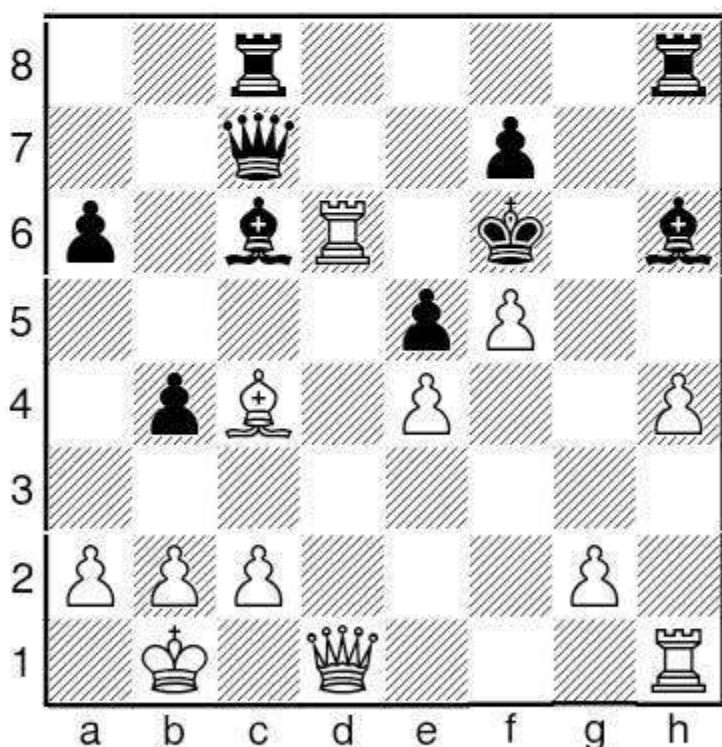
This sacrifice puts Black firmly on the back foot.

23. ♖b3?! does not create any serious threats and after 23... a5 24. ♖d3? a4 25. ♖xf7 ♖xe4 26. ♖e6 d5! Black was dominating in Svidler – Dubov, Moscow 2012.

23. b3 is more sensible, but after 23... ♖xd5!? 24. ♔xd5 ♖cf8 (24... ♖h7?! 25. g4!? →) Black's position will be much harder to crack, since the dark squares are weak and we don't have the a2-a4 idea. A possible continuation is 25. g4 ♖e3 26. ♖h3 ♖d4 27. g5!? ♖xh5 28. g6 ♔d8 29. ♔a8† ♔e7 and White must take a draw.

23. g4!? N 23... ♖xd5 24. ♖xd5 also deserves attention, although my preliminary analysis indicates that Black can keep the balance with careful defence.

## 23... ♔xf6 24. ♖xd6†

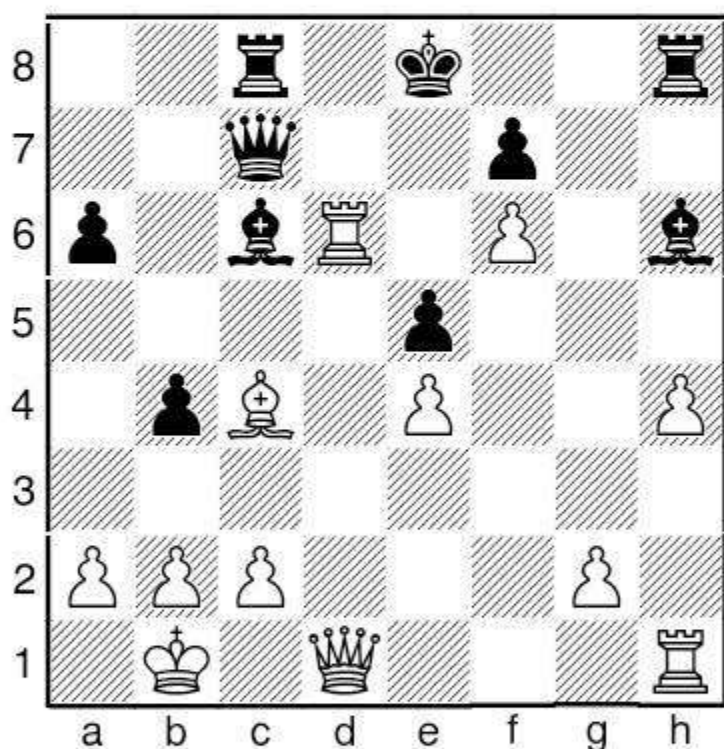


Black must decide between **A221)** 24... ♔e7 and **A222)** 24... ♔g7. It might seem strange to extend the analysis to a great depth – and by no means should you try to memorize, or even depend on this analysis, but it's useful to know

about some of the attacking possibilities that exist. Some of the following lines might seem excessive, but I wanted to satisfy myself that my initial judgement was correct, and to give you the confidence to believe in this line – especially since White has avoided it in all the games so far...

### A221) 24...♔e7 25.f6† ♔e8

25...♔f8 deprives Black of the ...♙f8 resource. White's simplest possibility is 26.♖e1!?, safeguarding the e4-pawn, when the computer thinks Black should play 26...♔e8 after all. (26...a5 27.g4! ♙f4 28.g5→) The only plus point for Black is that the h4-pawn is undefended, but after 27.g3∞ it feels to me as though White has benefited from the extra ♖e1 move.



There are a lot of possibilities for White from here, although it was hard to prove a clear advantage against the computer. Still, I found some subtle ideas which I believe will be almost impossible for Black to meet in a practical game.

### 26.♙b3!

26.♙g4 ♙d7 27.♖xd7 ♔xc4 28.♖c1 ♔c6 29.♖d6 leads to a



draw.

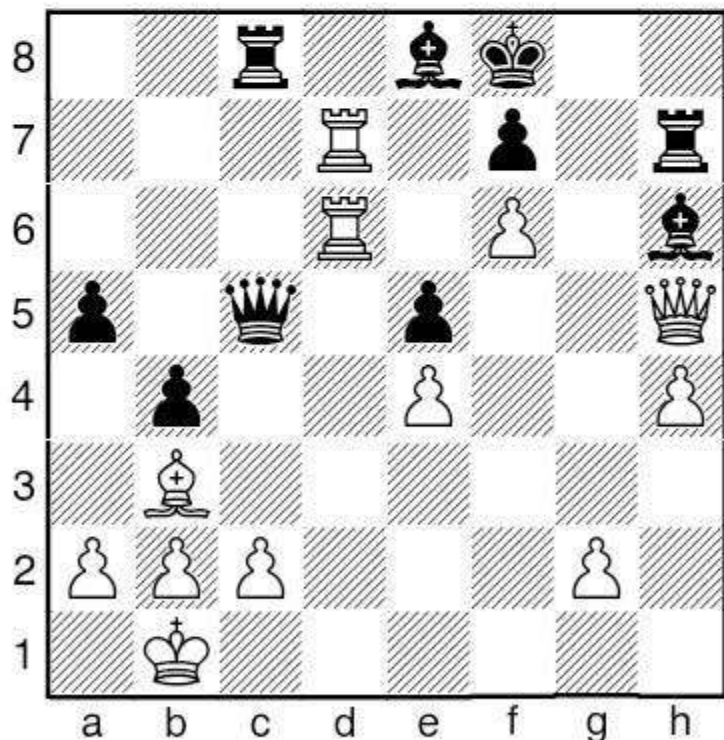
26.♙xa6 was another choice of the computer, but wasting two moves just for a pawn doesn't seem the best approach to me. Still, Black needs to be precise: 26...♖b8 27.♙c4 ♙f8! (27...♔f8 28.♖f1!±) 28.♖d2 ♖h6 29.♚f3 ♖d8 30.♖xd8† ♚xd8 31.♖d1 ♙d6 32.♖f1 ♖xh4 and Black manages to hang on. Of course this could be analysed more, but our main line is just stronger.

## 26...♙f8

Black has to try this concrete approach, as other moves fail to dampen White's initiative:

26...♖d8 27.♖xd8† ♚xd8 28.♚e2 (28.♚f3!?) 28...♙b5 29.♚f3 ♙d2 30.♙d5±

26...a5 27.♚g4! ♔f8 (27...a4 28.♖xc6! ♚xc6 29.♙xa4+–) 28.♖hd1 ♙e8 29.♖d7 ♚c6 30.♖1d6 ♚c5 31.♚h5 ♖h7



32.a4! Avoiding problems on the back rank. Black's position is just collapsing after 32...bxa3 33.♚f5 ♖h8 34.♖d8 ♖xd8 35.♖xd8 ♚c7 36.♚c8! ♚xc8 37.♖xc8+– followed by ♙a4.

## 27.♖d3!



27.♖d2? ♜h6! turns the tables, since 28.♕f3 ♜d8± enables Black to steal the f6-pawn.

I spent some time considering the wacky, exotic 27.♖xc6!? ♕xc6 28.g4, which is an amazing idea. White is a rook down but he just continues pushing the kingside pawns nonchalantly. Eventually I was able to find defences for Black, but the time spent considering this sacrifice was by no means wasted.

### 27...♞b5

27...♜h6 28.♕f3 ♜d8 (28...♞b5 29.♜d5±) does not work here since 29.g4!± consolidates everything.

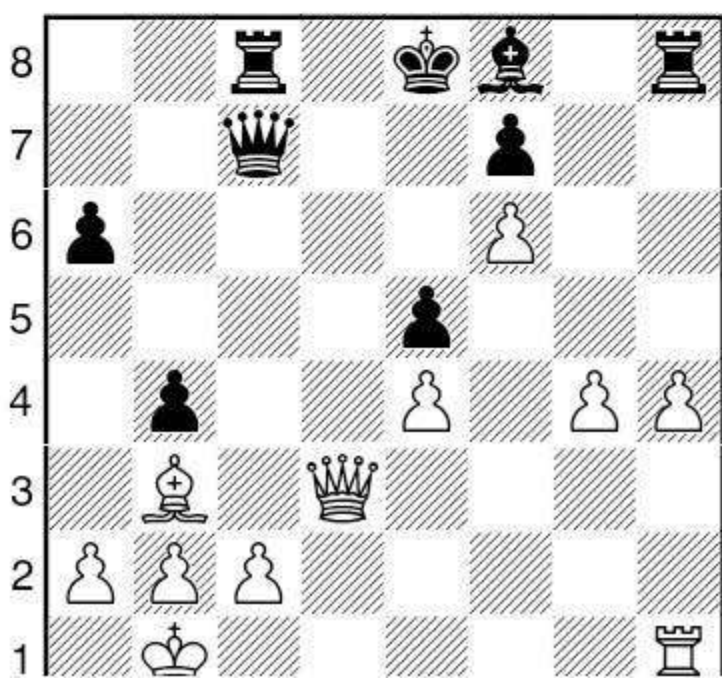
### 28.g4!?

28.♜d5 ♞c6 would be a strange repetition.

A much more normal continuation would be: 28.♜d2 ♜h6 29.g4 (29.♕f3? ♜d8! is Black's idea behind provoking ♜d2) 29...♖xf6 30.g5 ♜d6 31.h5 This interesting position could certainly be explored further; it looks like Black will have to be careful, but I like the idea in the main line even more.

### 28...♞xd3 29.♕xd3

Remember the note with 27.♖xc6 above? We now have a better version of it.





## 29...♙c5

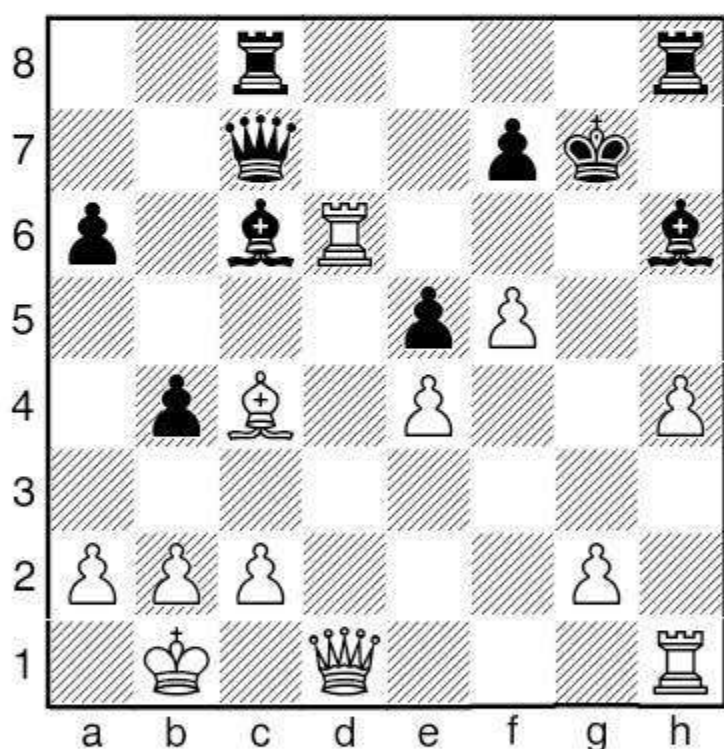
29...♙d7 can be met by the calm 30.♙xd7† ♔xd7 31.♙xf7 ♖c6 32.g5 when Black is struggling to equalize.

Also after 29...♙d6 30.♙f3 ♙c6 31.g5 ♖c7 32.h5 it is hard for Black to control the pawns.

## 30.g5

It's hard to give a definitive evaluation here, but I think Black has to be a lot more careful. White can block any counterplay by posting his bishop on d5 or b3 as required, and he can gradually prepare a further advance of the kingside pawns.

### A222) 24...♔g7



This time Black tries to hide his king on the kingside in order to connect his rooks. Objectively it may be a decent move, but the main problem for Black is that White has a huge number of possibilities.

## 25.♙h3!?

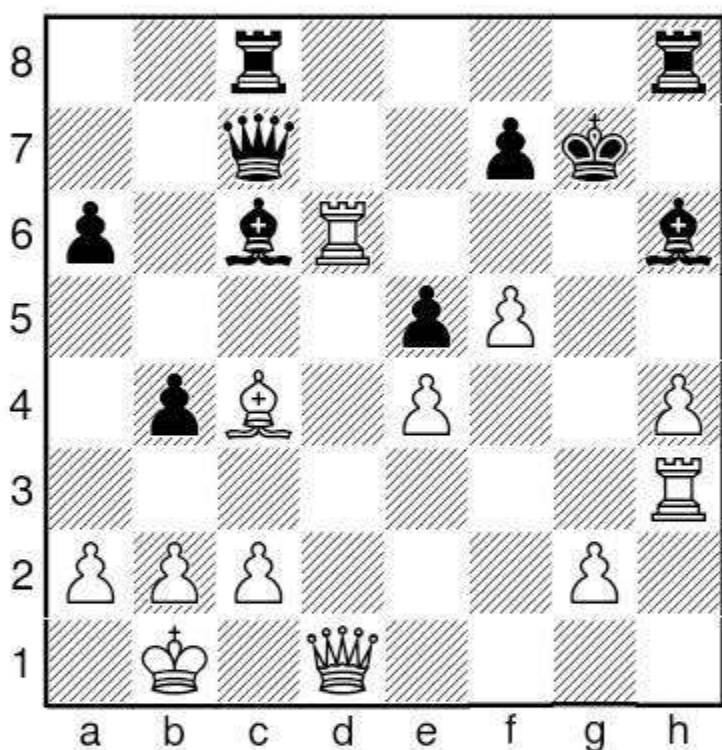
25.♙xa6 once again seems like the wrong idea, and 25...b3! is annoying.

25.♙xf7 ♖xf7 26.♚h5† ♔g8 27.♚g6† leads to a repetition.

The computer suggests 25.b3 but after 25...♖cd8! 26.♚g4† ♕f8 27.♖xd8† ♚xd8 28.♙xf7 ♖xf7 29.♚g6† ♕f8 30.♚xc6 ♙e3 I don't see how we can expect more than a draw, despite the machine's optimism.

25.f6† ♕h7 26.g4!? is another possibility that deserves attention: 26...♙xe4 27.♙d3 ♙xd3 28.♚xd3† ♔g8

This seems like a fun position to analyse further, although I would expect the machine's evaluation of 0.00 to hold up.

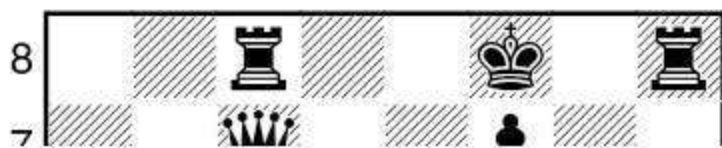


**25...♙f4!**

This seems like the best defence.

25...♕h7? runs into 26.♖hd3!+– with the deadly threat of ♚h5.

25...♙xe4 is too greedy: 26.f6† ♕h7 (26...♕f8 27.♙b3 ♖h7 28.♖d7 ♚b6 29.♖h1±) 27.♙d3! ♙xd3 28.♚xd3† ♔g8 29.♖g3† ♕f8



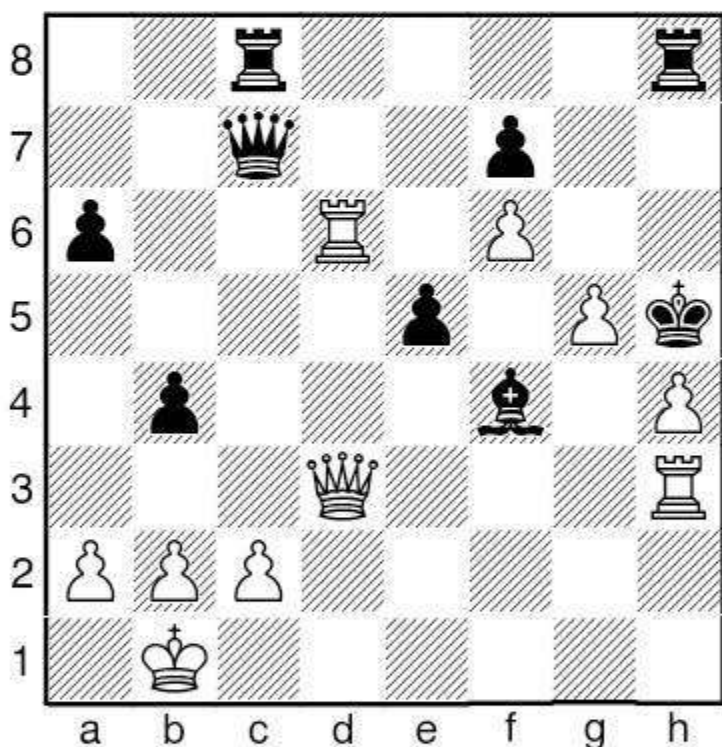


30.a3! bxa3 (30...♔e8 31.axb4+-) 31.♖d7 ♕c6 (31...♕c5 32.♖d8†) 32.♕xa3†+-

Finally, 25...♗cd8!? is not so terrible, but after 26.♗hd3! ♗xd6 27.♗xd6 ♕e8 (27...♕xe4? 28.f6† ♔h7 29.♕d3+-) 28.b3 White continues to exert pressure, while Black doesn't have a clear way to equalize. We can soon collect the a6-pawn as well, while a kingside pawn avalanche always remains an option!

## 26.♕g4†!?

An entertaining draw occurs after: 26.f6† ♔h6 (26...♔f8 27.♗hd3!→) 27.g4 ♕xe4 28.g5† ♔g6 29.♕d3 ♕xd3 30.♕xd3† ♔h5



31.♗h1 (31.c3 ♗cd8=) 31...♗cd8 32.♕e2† ♔g6 33.h5† ♔xg5 34.♕g2† ♔f5 35.♕h3† ♔g5=

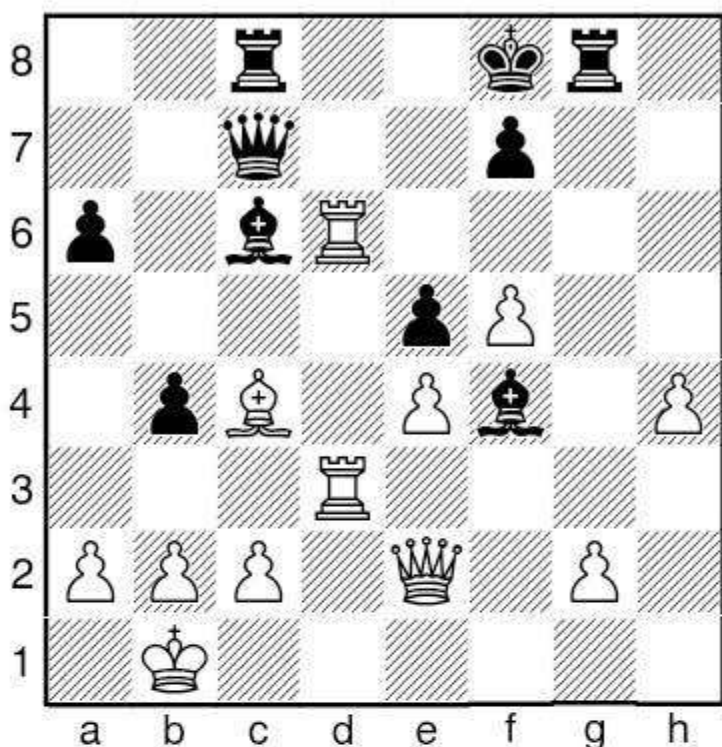
## 26...♔f8 27.♗hd3 ♗g8

27...♕xe4? 28.f6! wins after 28...♕xd3 29.♕g7† or 28...♗g8 29.♕xc8† ♕xc8 30.♖d8†.

27...♕e8 28.b3=

## 28. ♔e2

28. ♔h5 gives Black a couple of ways to hold: 28... ♖b5 (28... ♖xe4 29. ♖d8† ♖xd8 30. ♖xd8† ♔g7 31. ♔g4† ♔f6 32. ♔xg8 ♖xc2†=) 29. b3 ♖xg2 (29... ♖xc4? 30. ♖d7!) 30. ♖d1 ♖g7 31. f6 ♖g6 White must take a draw.



From this position the game just seems to go on, with no forced draw in sight. There are a lot of '0.00' moves according to the computer, but none of them are forced, so there is no point in attempting an exhaustive analysis. Besides, will anyone be interested in playing such a line for Black? White obviously doesn't take too much risk unless he decides to play overly ambitiously. He can just solidify his bishop's position with b2-b3, and start to advance the kingside pawns with g2-g4. I will give just a few more moves for illustrative purposes.

## 28... a5

This is one of the top computer suggestions, as well as a natural move for a human player. Now Black won't have to worry about the a6-pawn dropping off, and maybe the pawn can support an eventual counterattack.

28... ♖xe4?? loses instantly after 29. ♔xe4 ♖xc4 30. ♔xc4 ♖xc4



31.f6.

28...♖h8 29.b3 ♖xh4 is another greedy option. 30.g3 ♗xg3 31.f6! gives us a strong attack.

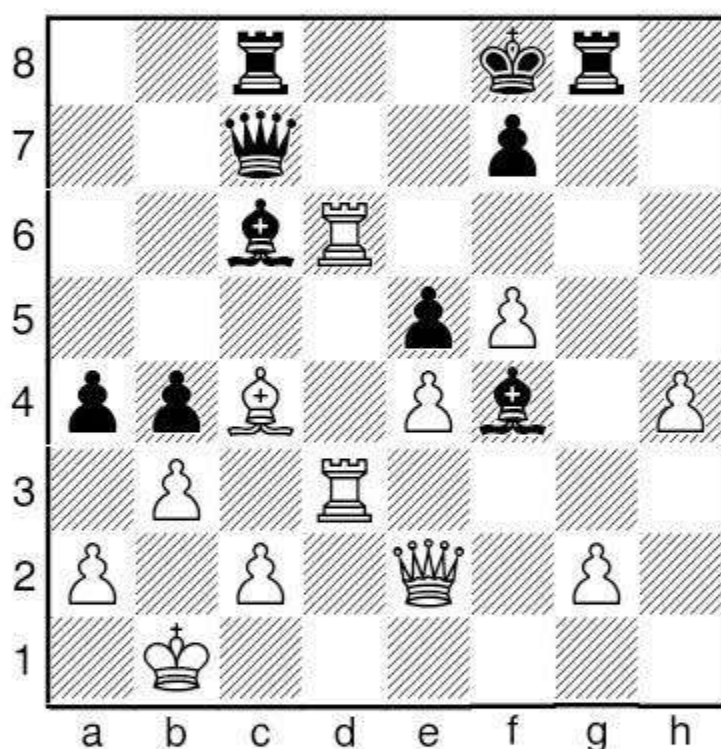
28...♗e8 should be met by the simple 29.b3=.

### 29.b3!

29.g4? is premature due to 29...♗xe4! 30.♔xe4 ♖xg4 and Black wins, so instead we should strengthen the position.

### 29...a4

29...♗e8 30.g4→



### 30.f6!

30.g4 ♖h8 31.♔e1 also looks dangerous but I think 31...♔g7! is an option we shouldn't allow – hence the text move.

30...♗e8 31.g4 ♖h8 32.♔e1↑

The game goes on, but Black does not have an easy life.

### B) 15...♔c5!



This has not been as popular as 15...h5, as most players assumed it was too dangerous to allow the knight to go to h5. However, there have been a number of correspondence and engine games showing that Black can counter the knight jump with a dynamic plan involving ...♕e7, ...0-0-0 and ...d5. If it's true that ♖h5 isn't a problem, then it makes sense for Black to delay ...h5 for at least another move – especially when you consider the resources available to White in the variations shown earlier.

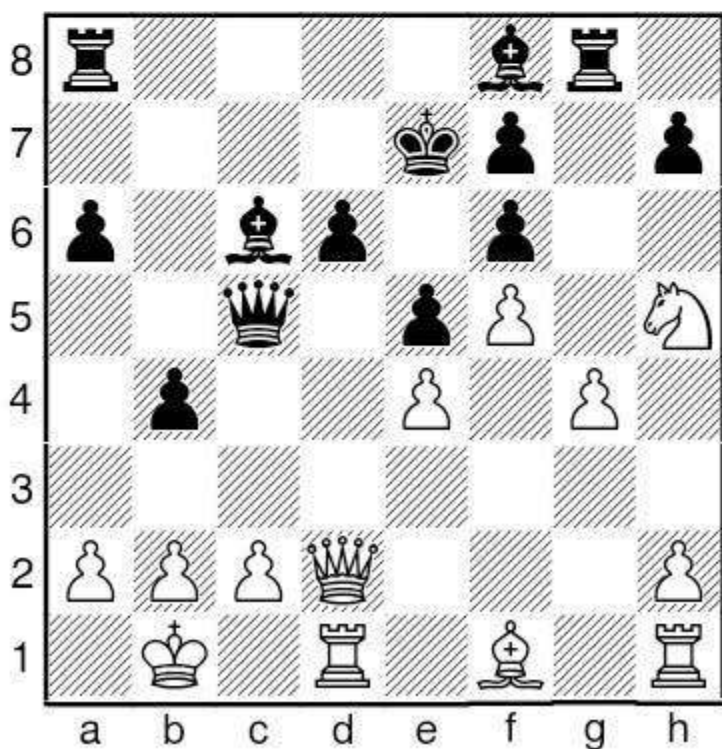
We will consider **B1) 16.♖h5** and **B2) 16.♕d3!?**.

### B1) 16.♖h5

Obviously this is a critical line, so it makes sense to check it first.

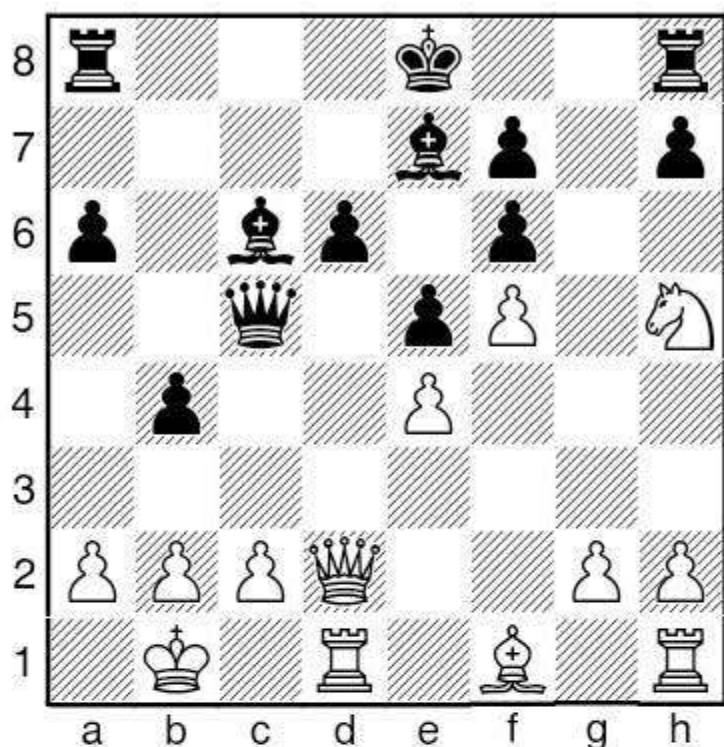
#### 16...♕e7!

The ugly 16...♕e7 has been more popular, but I won't spend much time on it as it's only a matter of time before White arranges a crushing g4-g5. He can even go for an immediate 17.g4!? (The patient 17.♕d3 is also fine) 17...♖g8 (17...♕xe4? 18.♕g2 gives White an overwhelming initiative)





18.♖g1! Exploiting Black's king position. 18...♖d8 (Or 18...♙xe4, Perunovic – Jankovic, Neum 2014, 19.♙g2N with great compensation) 19.♙d3 White had an excellent position in Obrusnik – Dobrowolski, Kolobrzeg 2008.



## 17.g4!?

This seems really interesting to me, although it didn't make a big impact in the two correspondence games in which it was tried.

## 17.♙d3

This has been the most popular move, but it allows Black to show his big idea.

## 17...0-0-0!

Somewhat counter-intuitive, but the ...d5 break offers excellent counterplay.

## 18.♙e2

18.♙xa6†N 18...♔c7 19.♙e2 d5 20.exd5 ♙xd5 gives Black plenty of play for the pawn.

18.♖c1 d5 19.c3 b3! is also promising for Black.

## 18...d5 19.♘g3

19.exd5N 19...♖xd5 20.♙xa6† ♔b8 (20...♔c7 21.♘g3) 21.♘g3 ♖hd8 22.♙d3 ♖d4=

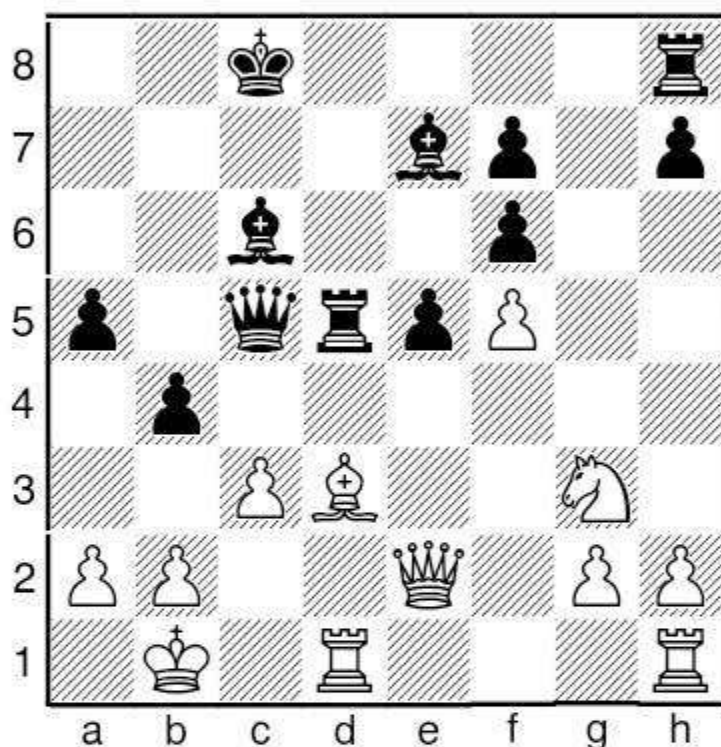
## 19...a5 20.exd5

20. ♖h5? a4 21. ♖xf7 a3! ♖

20... ♖xd5 21. c3! ? N

21. ♔e4 ♖xd1† 22. ♖xd1 ♔c7 23. ♔xc6 ♔xc6 24. ♘e4 ♖d8 was soon agreed drawn in Cernovsky – Fedak, corr. 2013. Objectively it's equal, although in an over-the-board game White could try playing on with the good knight against bad bishop, so you could keep this in mind as a safe back-up line.

The text move is my attempt to create new problems for the defence, but Black has enough resources.



21... ♔b8!

Amazingly, White has no way to exploit the open queenside. Moving the king is important, as it allows Black to recapture on b4 with the pawn.

In the event of 21... ♖hd8 22. cxb4 ♔xb4 23. ♖c1 ♖c5 24. ♖xc5 ♔xc5 25. ♖c1 ♔b8 26. ♖c3 White has some initiative.

22. ♖c1

22. cxb4 axb4 23. ♔e4 ♖xd1† 24. ♖xd1 ♔b5 25. ♔d3 ♔c6 26. ♖c1 (26. ♘e4 ♔b6) 26... ♔b6 27. ♔e4 ♔b5 is equal.

22... ♔b6 23. ♔e4

23. cxb4 axb4 24. ♖xc6 ♔xc6 25. ♔e4 ♖hd8 seems okay

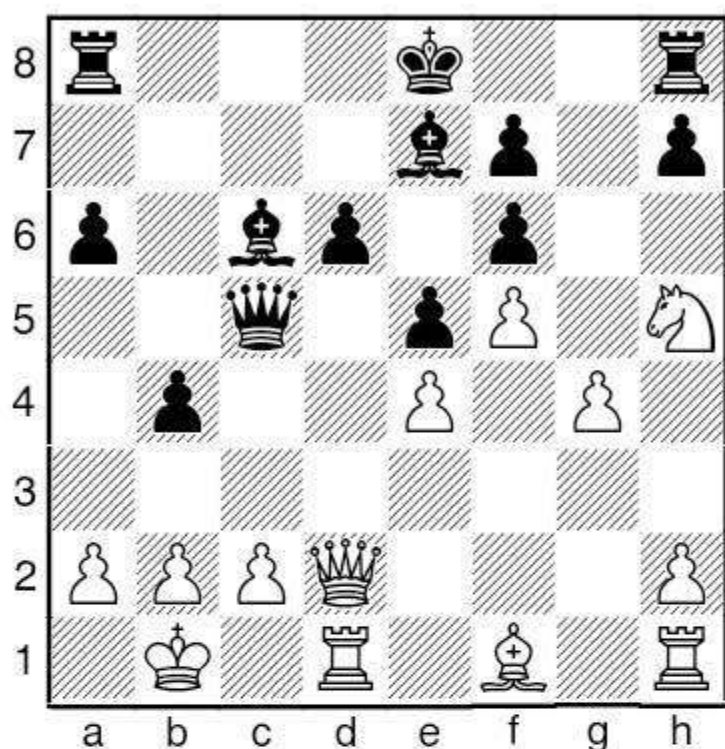


for Black too.

23...bxc3 24.♖xc3 ♖b5 25.♙c2 ♖c5

White has no advantage.

Let's see if White can fare any better with 17.g4!?:



17...♖g8!

Preventing g4-g5 ideas for now.

After 17...♖xe4 18.♖g2 ♖xg2 19.♙xg2 ♖c8 20.♖d5 ♙b6 Black managed to draw in Mergard – Brodt, corr. 2013. However, it feels to me that 21.♖hd1N± would be distinctly unpleasant for Black in an over-the-board game.

18.h3

18.♖d3!?!N 18...♖xg4 19.♙h6 0-0-0 seems okay for Black, although this could certainly be analysed further.

18...a5!?

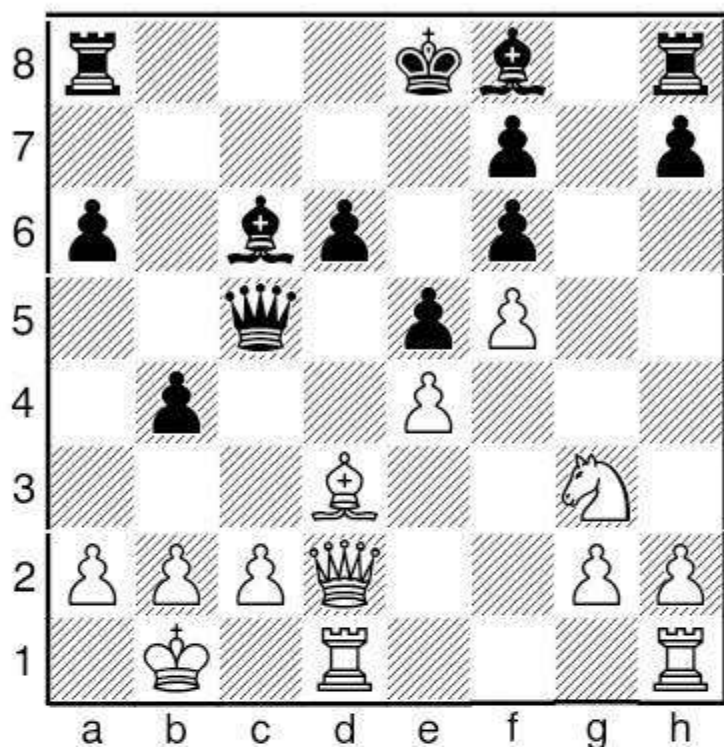
18...0-0-0!?!N also looks interesting, but I don't want to get too distracted as the main move proved reliable in a correspondence game.

19.♖d3 a4 20.♖he1 ♙d4 21.♙c1 ♙c5 22.♙h6

22...a3! 23.♘xf6† ♕xf6 24.♙xf6 axb2 25.♔xb2 ♖c3† 26.♔b1  
 ♜xa2! 27.♔xa2 ♖a3† 28.♔b1 b3

Black's counterplay was enough for a draw in Sizov – Eremin, corr. 2009.

### B2) 16.♙d3!?



This unpretentious move is simply intended to prepare ♘h5. With the bishop already on d3, Black will not have time to meet this move with ...♙e7, ...0-0-0 and ...d5.

We will start by looking at **B21) 16...a5** to prove the above point, before moving on to the main line of **B22) 16...h5**.

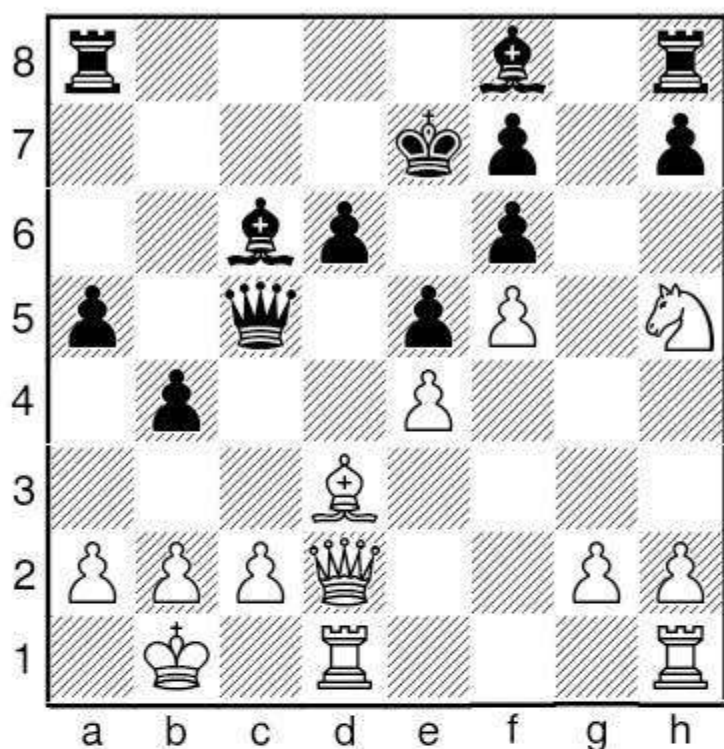
The immediate 16...0-0-0? makes no sense, as the ...d5 plan will not work with the knight on g3 as opposed to h5. The simple 17.♙e2 gives White a substantial advantage, as does taking the a6-pawn.

### B21) 16...a5 17.♘h5 ♙e7

17...♙e7?! does not make much sense here in view of 18.♙e2 0-0-0 19.c3!N when Black does not have time to get counterplay with ...d5.



The present position has occurred many times, with reasonable results for Black. However, this has mostly been due to various mistakes by White. If he concentrates on the simple attacking plan of g4-g5, it is hard for Black to find a good response.



**18.g4! ♖g8 19.♖hg1 a4**

The exchange sacrifice 19...♖g5N 20.h4 ♖xh5 21.gxh5 holds up the attack for a while, but Black has nothing like proper compensation: 21...a4 22.♔e2 a3 23.♙c4±

**20.h4**

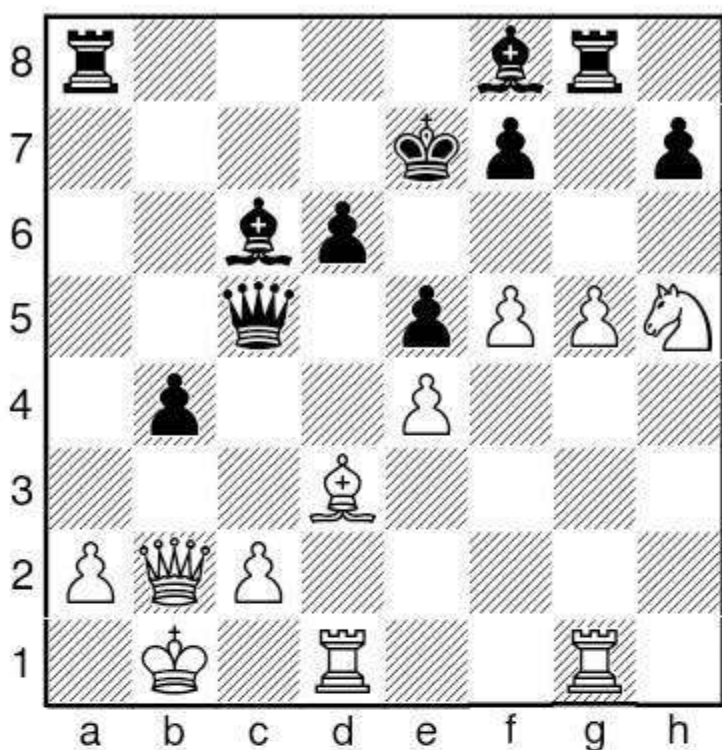
20.g5!? fxg5 21.♙c4!N is an interesting alternative. The machine manages to keep Black alive as usual, but for a human player his position seems on the verge of collapse. Still, the main line demonstrates that a slower approach also works well.

**20...a3**

20...h6 21.♔e2 a3 22.♙c4 leaves White in control, and he has scored heavily from this position in correspondence play.

**21.g5 ♔d4 22.♔c1 fxg5 23.hxg5 axb2 24.♔xb2 ♔c5**

The endgame would be a depressing prospect for Black, but the middlegame is not much of an improvement for him.



## 25. Nf6

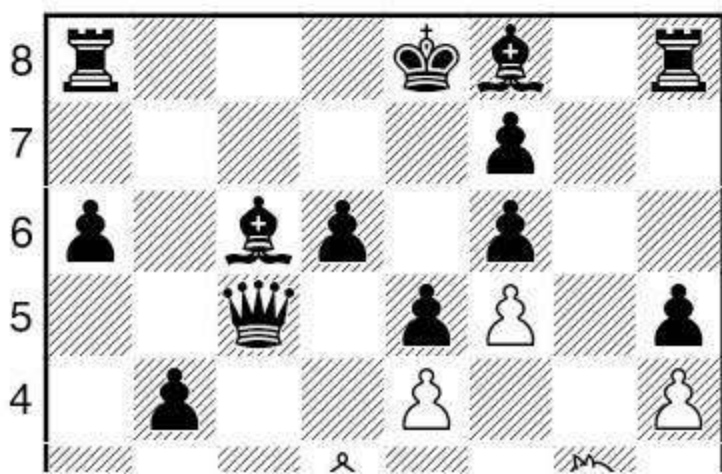
The simplest choice, forcing a material gain.

25. Rg3 Ra3 26. Rh1 Qd8 27. Nf6 Rg7 28. Rg4 Qe7 29. Nxe7± was also unpleasant for Black in Ryzhkov – Trofimov, email 2008.

## 25... Rxe5 26. Rxe5 Qxf6 27. Rg8±

White went on to win in Malashenkov – Pascual Perez, Internet 2012.

## B22) 16... h5 17. h4





White should prevent ...h4 and fix the h5-pawn as a weakness. We have now transposed to a position more commonly reached via the 15...h5 16.h4 ♖c5 17.♗d3 move order. Back on page 270 I mentioned the transposition but recommended 17.♕e2 for White, but that does not mean the present variation is a substandard choice – I just felt that the 17.♕e2 line posed even greater problems to the defence. As we will see, this variation also isn't a picnic for Black.

## 17...♗h6

This is the most logical move, activating the bishop and planning to exchange queens.

## 17...a5

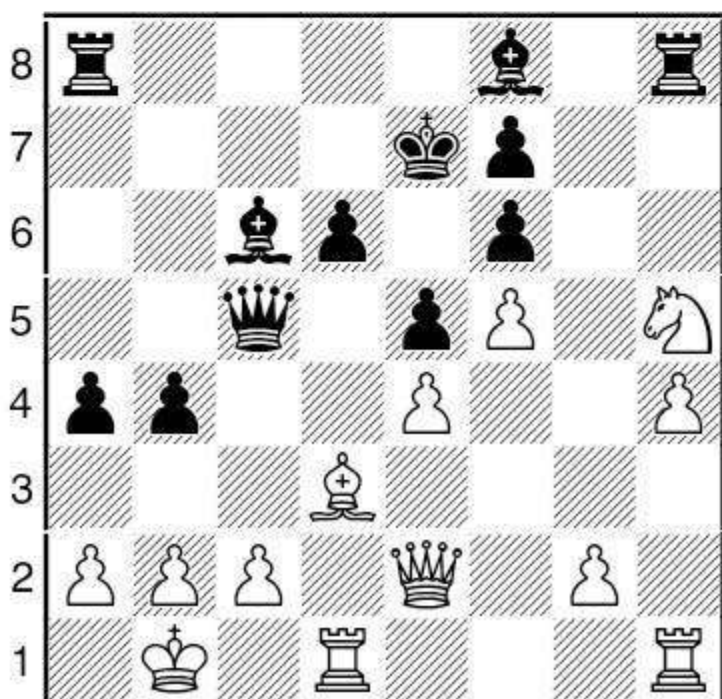
Trying for a queenside attack is a natural alternative, but it is too slow.

## 18.♕e2 a4 19.♘h5

White should stick to his main plan. Instead 19.♗c4?! ♖a7 20.c3 ♗h6! led to insane complications in Grandelius – Hillarp Persson, Borlange 2014.

## 19...♕e7

19...a3 should be met by 20.g4!N with the idea of ♗c4. I don't think Black has anything better than 20...♕e7, transposing to the line below. Instead 20...♕d4? is refuted by 21.c3! bxc3 22.♗b5.



20.g4! a3 21.♙c4 axb2 22.♙b3

A solid choice, although White has also achieved excellent results with 22.♖h3!?

22...♖xh5

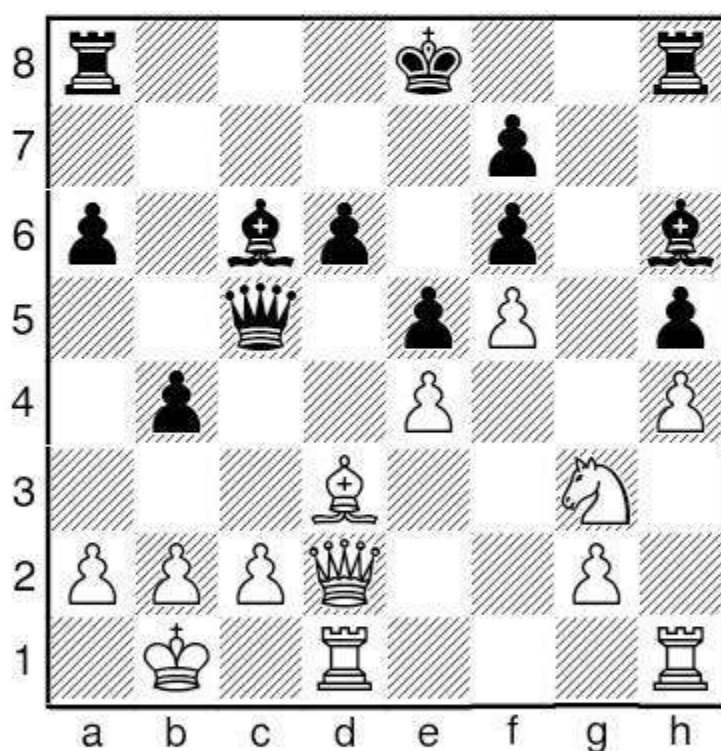
22...♙h6? allowed the typical 23.♘xf6! in Bernal Varela – Tasic, Internet 2005.

23.gxh5 ♙h6

In T. Nguyen – Tomczak, Malenovice 2013, Black once again resorted to an exchange sacrifice to stave off the threats to his king, but he has no real counterplay and little hope of building a fortress. My preferred continuation would be:

24.♔f3N±

White can easily improve his position, for instance by doubling on the d-file.



18.♔e2 ♔e3

18...♙e3? 19.♘xh5 ♔e7 20.g4 a5 21.♖h3 ♙d4 has, amazingly, scored 3/3 for Black, but this in no way reflects the quality of his position. 22.g5! (White played 22.♙c4? in two of those games, which is completely the wrong idea) 22...a4 23.♘xf6 a3

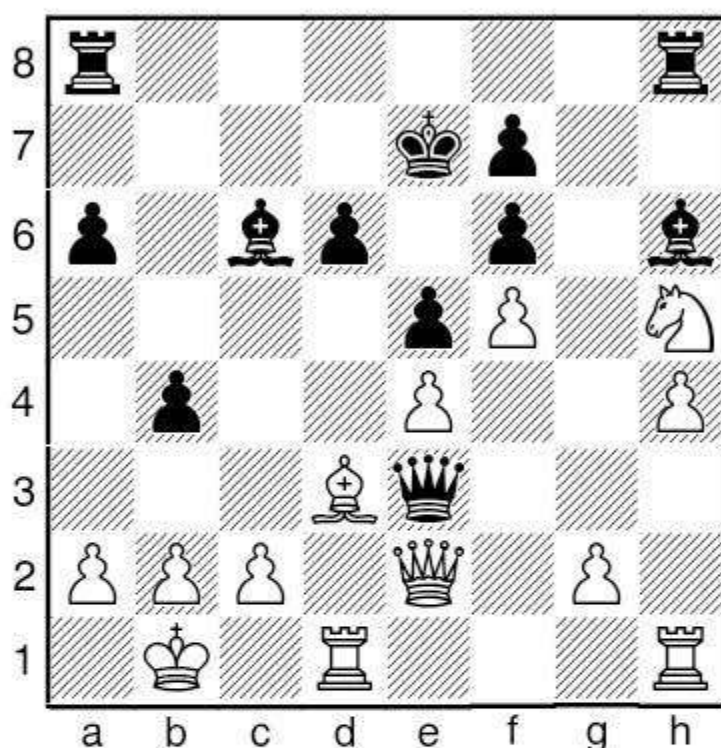




24.♔c4!N (24.c3 bxc3 25.b3 was unnecessarily complicated in Wozniak – Narva, Durban 2014) 24...axb2 (24...♔xb2 can be met in the same way) 25.h5+– Black has no real attack, and the kingside pawns should decide the game.

### 19.♞xh5 ♔e7

19...♔xe2?? 20.♞xf6†! ♔e7 21.♔xe2 would just leave White two pawns up.

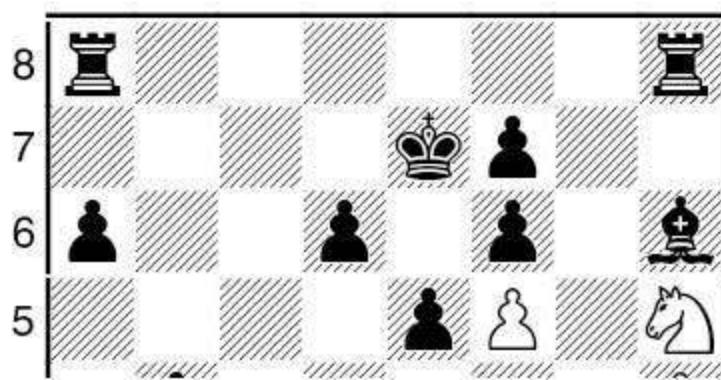


### 20.♔f1

This is the only way to avoid the queen exchange. It is vital to do so, as Black's bishop pair and active rooks would give him an excellent endgame, despite the missing pawn.

### 20...♔xe4 21.♞g1!

White mostly plays 21.♞h3 but after 21...♔xd3 22.♞xd3 Black has a nice trick:



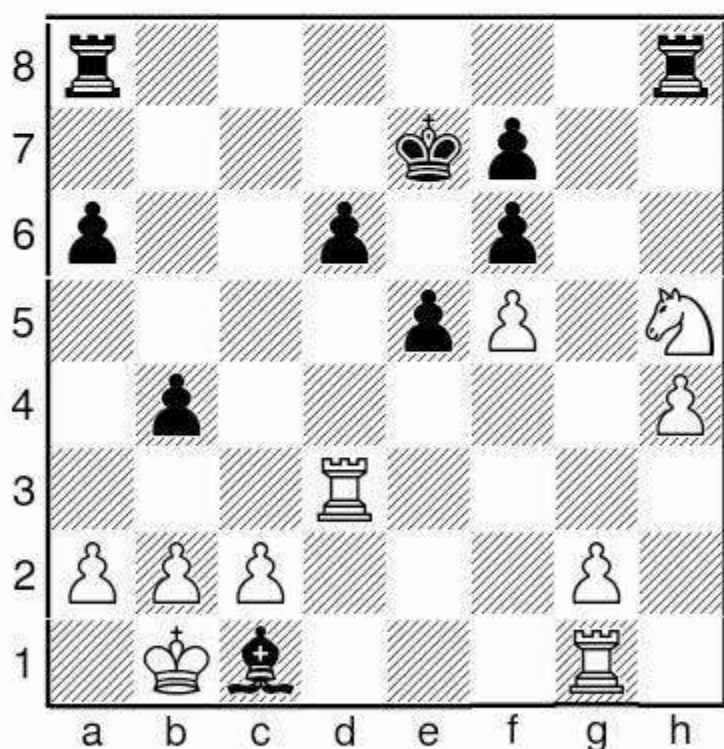
22...♔c1†! 23.♔xc1 ♕xc1 24.♔xc1 (24.g4 ♕h6 is also nothing special for White) 24...♖xh5 White's rooks are awkwardly placed, and after 25.g4 ♖h7 26.♖b3 a5 Black was fine in Prata – Janosi, Internet 2012.

The text move is less obvious, but once you see it the ideas are easy to understand. The rook supports an attack with g4-g5, while if Black goes for the simplifying continuation shown above, the rook will be on a better square for the upcoming endgame. The only drawback is that it does not immediately threaten anything, but Black has to play extremely concretely to make use of that.

## 21...b3!!N

Black is surviving on the edge with some flashy tactics, but even this spectacular move does not fully solve his problems. Of course we should check a few other moves as well.

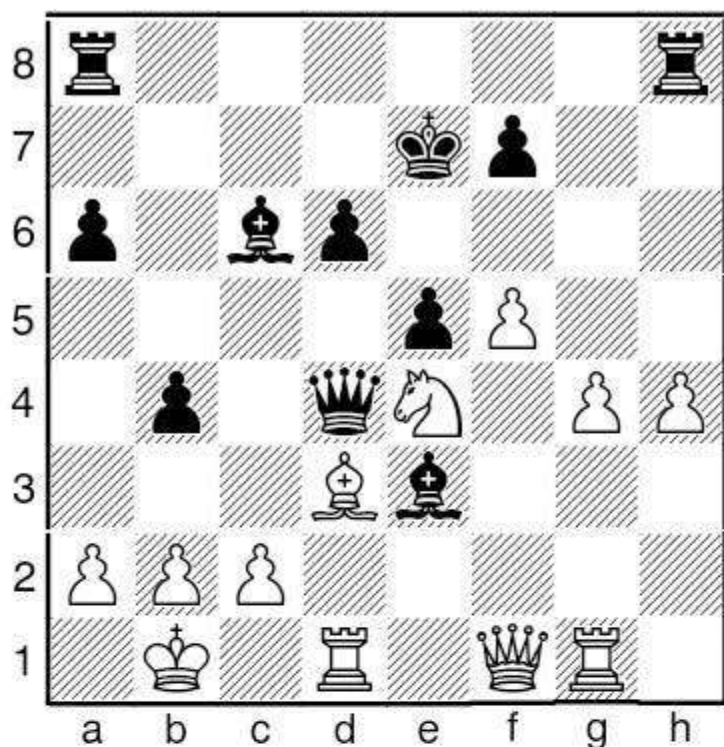
21...♕xd3N 22.♖xd3 ♔c1† 23.♔xc1 ♕xc1



24.g4! Compared to the note to White's last move, the rook is much better placed on g1 than h3 for the upcoming endgame. 24...♕h6 25.♖gd1 ♖hd8 26.c4±

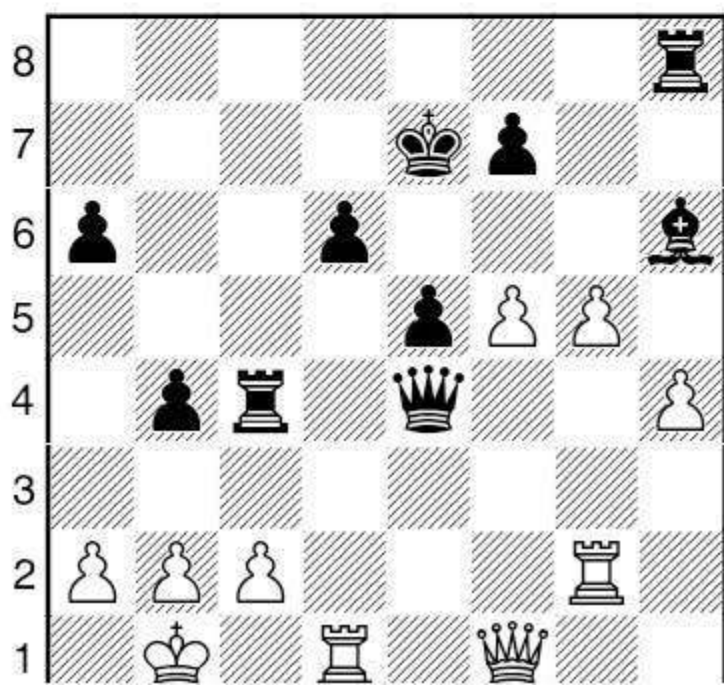


21...♙c6 22.g4 ♔c5 23.♘xf6 ♙e3 24.♘e4 ♔d4 has been played a few times, but White keeps control with the help of some simple tactics:



25.♖g3! ♙xe4 26.♙xe4 ♔xe4 27.♔e2!?N (27.♔e1 was also good for White in Khlopov – Wosch, Internet 2011) 27...♖xh4 28.♖xe3 ♔xg4 29.♔d2 ♖h6 (29...♖d8? 30.♖xe5†) 30.♖ee1↑

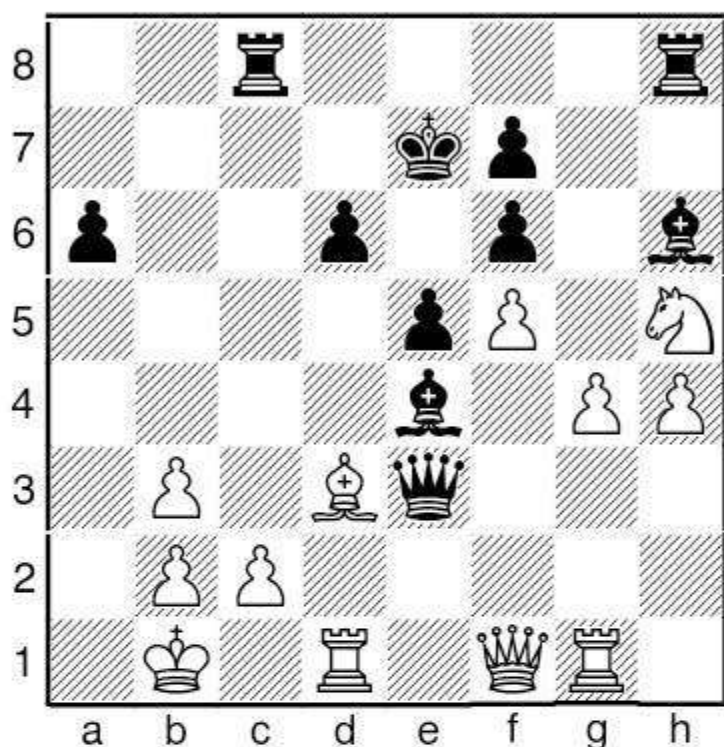
21...♙d5 also fails to equalize: 22.♙c4 ♙xc4 23.♔xc4 ♔c5 24.♔e2 ♔e3 25.♔f1! ♖ac8 26.g4 ♔e4 27.♖g2 White carries out the perfect regrouping and capitalizes on his advantage impressively. 27...♖c4 28.♘xf6 ♙xf6 29.g5† ♙e7



30.♖g2! I know... but it's correspondence chess, and it's not as though Black's moves have been the most natural either.  
 30...♖c6 31.♔g1 ♔e8 32.gxh6 ♖xh6 33.♔g8† ♔e7 34.♔a8± In Nookala – Wosch, email 2010, White went on to win with further elegant play.

**22.axb3 ♖ac8! 23.g4!**

23.♘g3 ♙c6 is not clear at all.



**23...♖xc2!**

Without this resource Black's position would collapse.

**24.♔xc2**

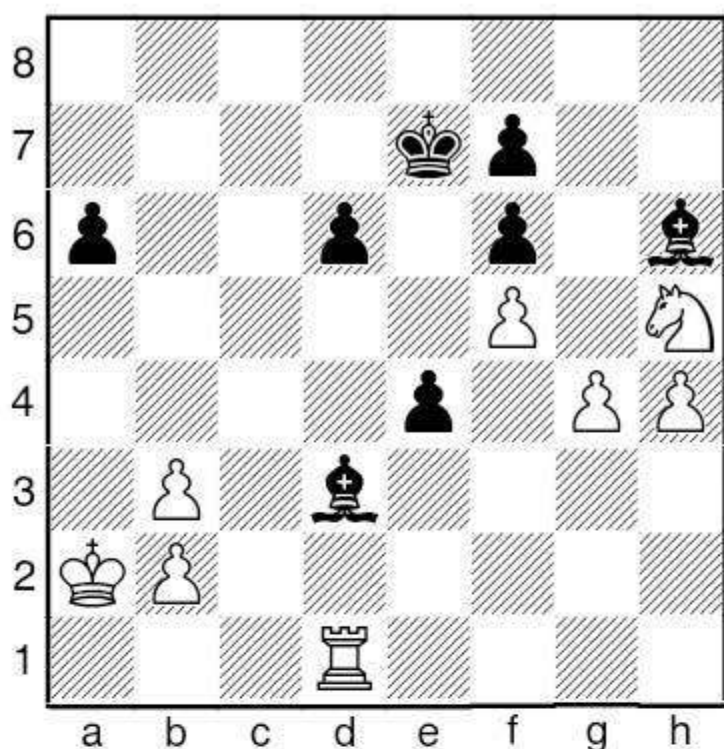
24.♙xc2? ♙xc2† 25.♔xc2 ♔e4† 26.♔d3 ♖c8† 27.♔b1 ♖c1† 28.♔a2 ♔xd3 29.♖xd3 ♖xg1± would leave White fighting for a draw.

**24...♖c8† 25.♔b1 ♖c1† 26.♔a2 ♙xd3 27.♔e1! ♔xe1 28.♖gxe1 ♖xd1 29.♖xd1 e4**

After a long, mostly forcing tactical sequence, we arrive at a most interesting endgame. At first Black seems to be fine – the two bishops and central pawns seem scary, especially with White's king and knight both being sidelined. However, we have some clever ways to improve



our position.



### 30. ♖g1!

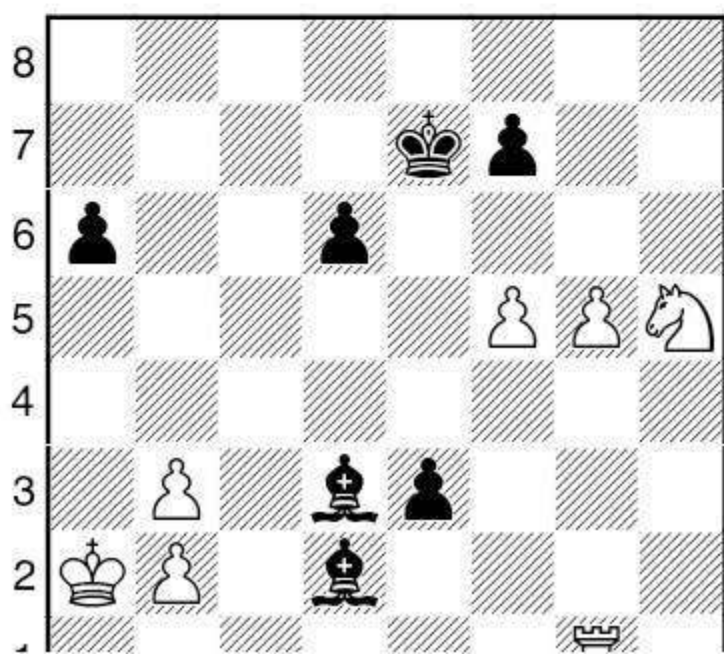
A crucial move, threatening g4-g5 and thus forcing Black to commit his bishop.

### 30... ♜d2

Now ...e3 is no longer a deadly threat because ♞f4 will hold things together. We still need to improve our pieces though, and we should start on the kingside.

### 31. g5 fxg5 32. hxg5 e3

Other moves are too slow.



### 33.f6†

The pawn was under attack on f5, so unfortunately we have to play this before bringing the knight back to f4.

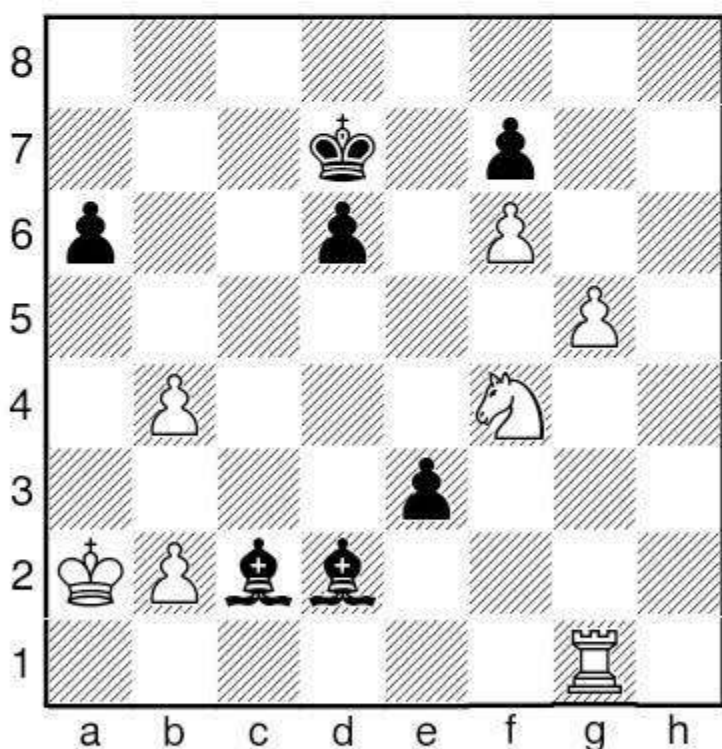
### 33...♔d7 34.♘f4 ♙e4 35.b4!

White should waste no time bringing his king into the mix. It is hard to say anything conclusive about this endgame, but it seems to me that White will not be in any real danger of losing once his king gets closer to the centre. Black, on the other hand, is material down and will have to keep an eye on the kingside pawns.

### 35...♙c2!?

35...d5 36.♔b3 leaves Black at a standstill, since ...d4 just allows the king to get to c4.

Also after 35...♙xb4 36.♔b3± the king joins the action and White is happy.



### 36.♔a3!

36.g6 ♙xg6 37.♔b3 ♙e4 38.♔c4 d5† 39.♔d4 ♙xb4 40.♖g8 is evaluated as slightly better for White by the machine, but Black is pretty close to a draw. To keep serious winning chances, we should try to hang on to the g5-pawn.



evaluated as slightly better for White by the machine, but Black is pretty close to a draw. To keep serious winning chances, we should try to hang on to the g5-pawn.

You might be wondering what the king is doing on a3, apart from defending a relatively useless pawn. In fact the king has excellent prospects, as Black's light-squared bishop can be driven away.

**36...d5 37.♘e2±**

Intending ♘d4 to evict the bishop. White's king will then be activated, making it a one-sided endgame.

## Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with what is probably the most strategically complex variation of the Rauzer. We started by analysing 15...h5 16.h4, when 16...♙h6!? is an interesting, if uninspiring, attempt by Black to hold an endgame a couple of pawns down. We then discussed the more common 16...♙c5, when 17.♙d3 transposes to a later variation but 17.♙e2!? tries to exploit Black's move order. I find Black's defensive task unenviable, especially in the main line when my new idea of 23.♘xf6!N ♙xf6 24.♖xd6† gives White three pawns plus an enduring initiative for a piece.

15...♙c5! seems like a more accurate move, considering that the obvious 16.♘h5 enables Black to get promising counterplay with a modern plan involving long castling. That is why I spent most of my efforts investigating 16.♙d3!?, intending to play ♘h5 under improved conditions. Black can avoid this with 16...h5, but after some further natural moves we saw that 21.♖g1! (instead of the more common 21.♖h3) poses Black significant problems. Even after the remarkable improvement 21...b3!!N, it seems that the ensuing endgame – despite my initial reservations! – offers us real winning chances.

# Chapter 20

## 4...e5



Lowenthal and Kalashnikov

### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5

5.♘b5

A) 5...a6 6.♘d6† ♕xd6 7.♔xd6

A1) 7...♔e7

A2) 7...♔f6 8.♔xf6 ♘xf6 9.♘c3 ♘b4 10.♕d3

A21) 10...d6

A22) 10...h6!?

B) 5...d6 6.♘1c3 a6 7.♘a3 b5 8.♘d5

B1) 8...♘f6

B2) 8...♘ce7

B3) 8...♘ge7 9.c4 ♘d4 10.♕d3 ♘xd5 11.cxd5

B31) 11...♕e7

B32) 11...g6 12.0-0 ♕g7 13.♘c2 0-0 14.♕e3

B321) 14...♔h8

B322) 14...♘xc2

B323) 14...♕d7

A22) after 14...♕d7!?



B32) note to 13...0-0



B322) after 17...f5





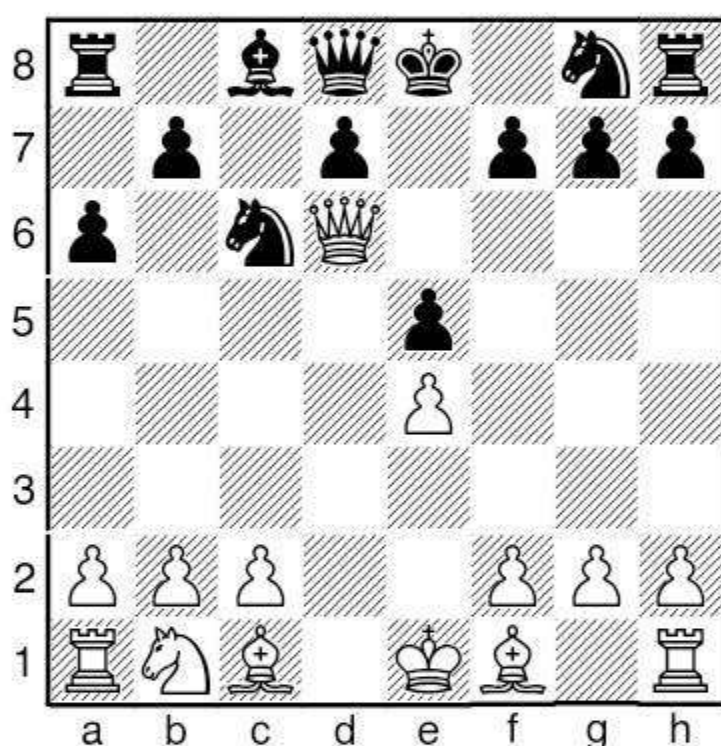
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5**

This is quite a popular position in modern praxis. Broadly speaking, Black is going for a position resembling the Sveshnikov, without having to deal with bucket-loads of theory.

**5.♘b5**

We will deal with A) 5...a6 followed by the more popular B) 5...d6.

**A) 5...a6 6.♘d6† ♙xd6 7.♙xd6**



Allowing the check on d6 is a positional concession, but Black hopes that his speedy development will make up for the loss of the dark-squared bishop. He cannot live with the queen on d6, so he invariably tries either A1) 7...♙e7 or A2) 7...♙f6.

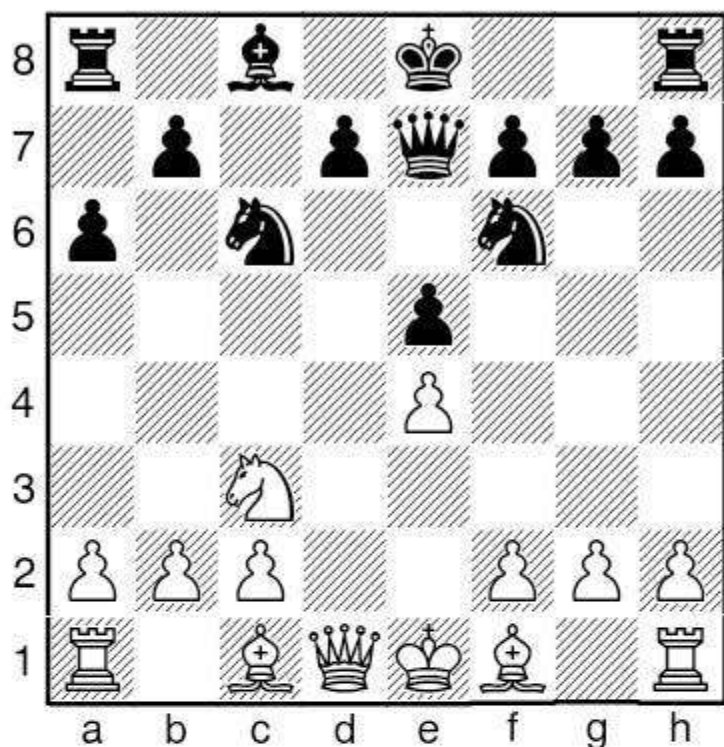
**A1) 7...♙e7 8.♙d1**

This retreat makes the most sense here since, unlike variation A2 below, Black does not have resources like ...♙g6 for counterplay. Instead he has to play slowly,

allowing White to develop and get a comfortable position.

8. ♖xe7† ♜gxe7 9. ♘c3 d5 10. exd5 ♜b4 11. ♙d3 ♙f5! is a major difference which shows the advantage of having the knight on e7.

8... ♜f6 9. ♘c3



9... d6

9... d5? 10. ♘xd5 ♜xd5 11. exd5± leaves Black with no compensation for the pawn.

9... h6? allows 10. ♘d5 ♜xd5 11. exd5 followed by d5-d6 with a clear advantage.

9... 0-0 is met by 10. ♙g5! with the terrible threat of ♘d5. Black must try something like 10... ♖e6, but after 11. ♙d3 h6 12. ♙h4N his position looks awkward. 12... ♜e7 (12... d6 13. ♘d5!±) 13. ♖f3±

10. ♙g5 ♙e6 11. ♘d5 ♙xd5 12. exd5 ♜b8

This is a typical pawn structure for the Sicilian, but Black has wasted some time and swapped both of his bishops for enemy knights. White has a simple plan of advancing his queenside majority.



**13.c4 ♘bd7 14.♙e2 0-0 15.0-0 h6 16.♙e3**

White can easily meet ...f5 with either f2-f3 or f2-f4, depending on circumstances and individual preferences.

**16...♘h7 17.♖c1 f5 18.f3**

Black has some strategic difficulties and will struggle to generate further play, as if he tries to open things up on the kingside he risks opening the game for White's bishops.

**A2) 7...♙f6 8.♙xf6**

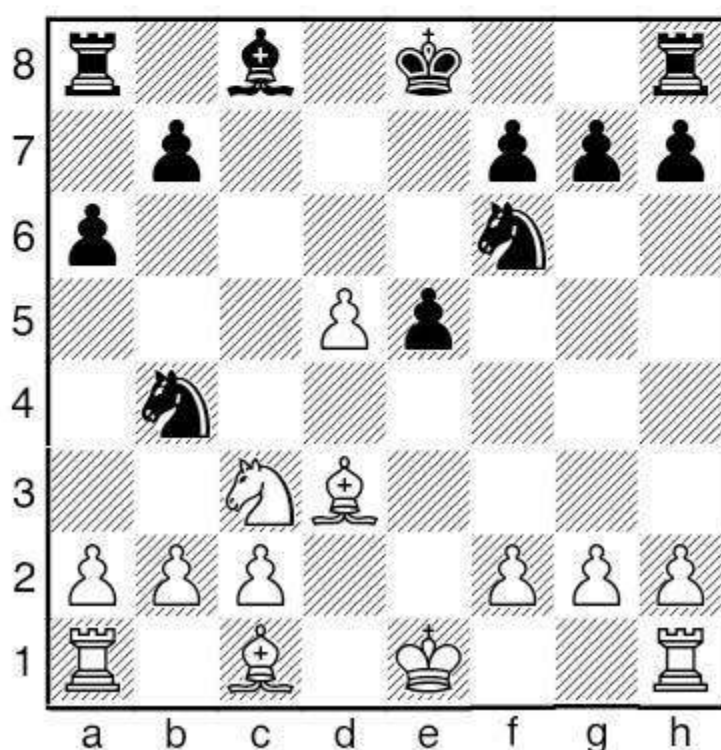
This time exchanging queens is preferable, since 8.♙d1 allows 8...♙g6 when White will have to deal with ideas like ...d5 in the near future, and I don't see why we should allow Black any chances of an initiative in such a minor line as this.

**8...♘xf6 9.♘c3 ♘b4**

Black has to try and cause problems, otherwise he will automatically be worse.

**9...d5 10.exd5 ♘b4 11.♙d3!**

Remember this key difference from the ...♘gxe7 line: Black's bishop cannot go to f5 here!



11...♘fxd5

11...♘xd3† 12.cxd3 ♖f5 Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, and the possibility that Black may win the pawn back eventually, the play is still one-sided.

13.0-0 0-0-0 (13...♙xd3 14.♖e1±; 13...0-0 14.♙g5 ♙xd3 15.♖fd1 ♙g6 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.d6± intending ♘d5)

14.♙g5 ♙xd3 15.♖fd1 ♙f5 16.f4 exf4 17.♖d4 ♙g6

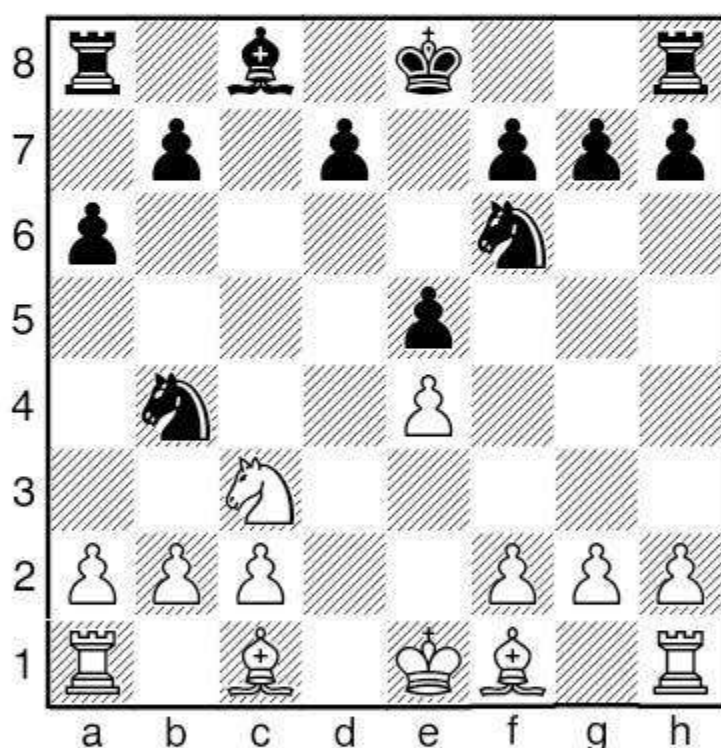
18.♖xf4 ♖d6 19.♖c4† With ♙f4 on the way, Black's rook was in trouble in Ducarmon – Zisman, Jerusalem 2015.

12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♙d2

White has an ideal position with the two bishops.

13...0-0 14.0-0-0 ♖e8 15.♖he1±

Fluvia Poyatos – Montell Lorenzo, Catalonia 2014.



10.♙d3

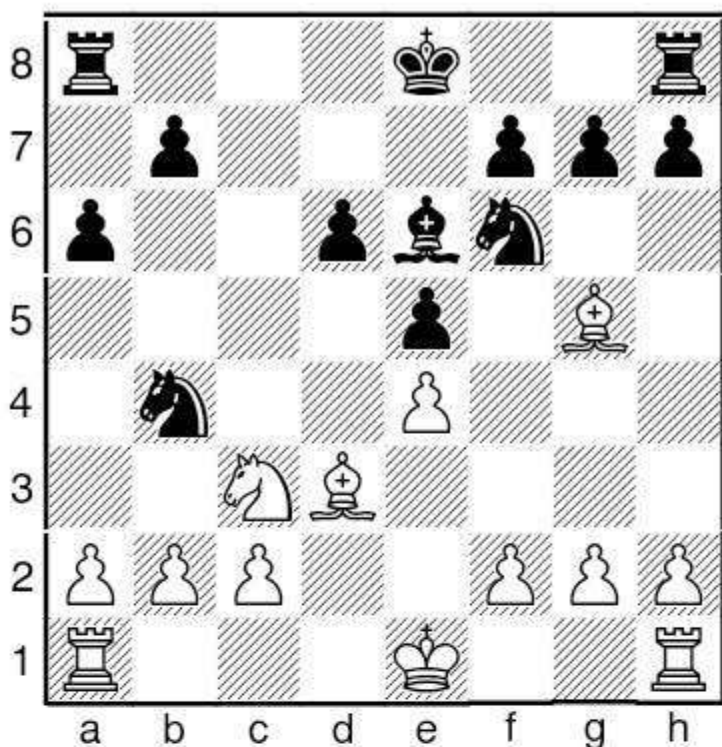
10.♙d2!? is an ambitious alternative which probably also leads to some advantage, but the text move appears simpler to me; White keeps the same idea as in the 9...d5 line.

Black may proceed with **A21)** 10...d6 or **A22)** 10...h6!?

10...♘xd3† 11.cxd3 d6 12.♙g5 ♙e6 13.f4 will transpose to variation A21.



## A21) 10...d6 11.♔g5 ♖e6



### 12.f4!

12.0-0-0 has been the common move, but 12...♖c8!? gives Black decent prospects. 13.a3 ♘xd3† 14.♖xd3 has been played, but now 14...♖xc3!N 15.bxc3 ♘xe4 is an ideal scenario for this thematic exchange sacrifice.

I also considered:

12.♕xf6!? gxf6 13.f4

This is similar to the main line, and has the benefit of preventing the ...♘g8 option. On the other hand, it allows Black to get a slightly better version of a different plan, and I'm not too worried by the ...♘g8 idea in any case. Still, White seems to have slightly better chances here too, so it's really a matter of preference.

13...♘xd3†

It makes sense to play this before White gets the option of recapturing with a rook.

13...f5 14.0-0-0 ♘xd3† 15.♖xd3 0-0-0 16.exf5 ♕xf5  
17.♖d2±

14.cxd3 f5

14...exf4 15.0-0±

15.♖d1!

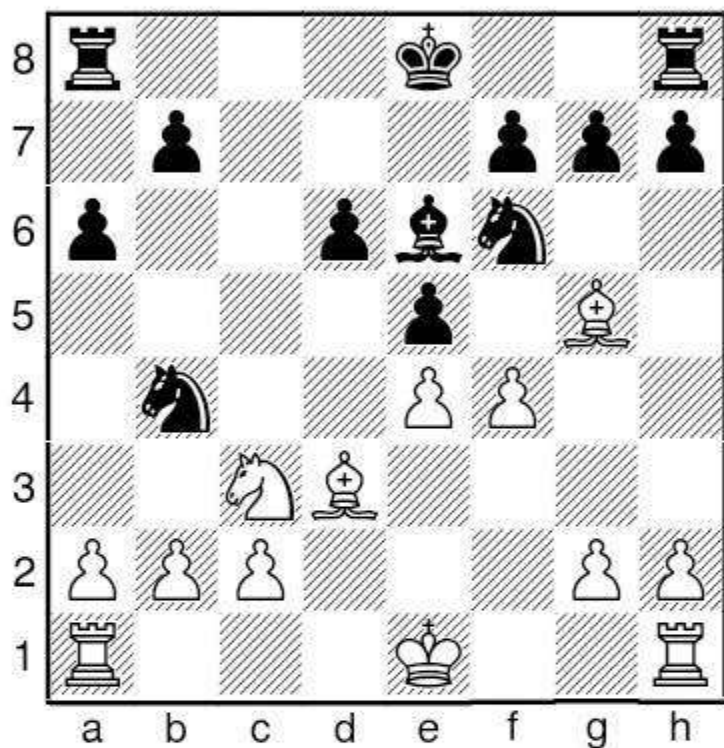
15.0-0 fxe4 16.f5 ♖d7 17.dxe4 ♖c6 18.♖ad1 ♔e7 is equal.

15...exf4

15...fxe4 16.dxe4 exf4 17.♖xd6 ♔e7 18.♖b6!±

16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.0-0 ♖g6 18.♖xf4±

White has the better structure and he can manoeuvre the rooks around for a while, but Black remains pretty solid.

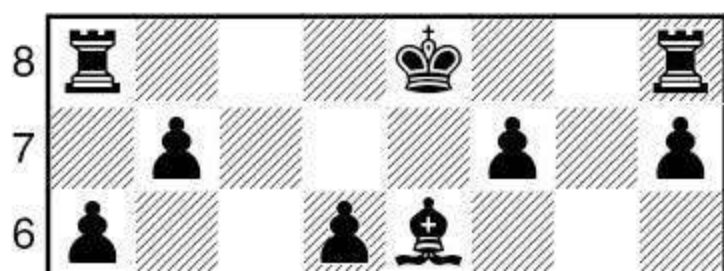


12...♘g8!?

12...d5? 13.♖xf6 gxf6 14.f5±

12...♖c8?! 13.♖xf6!N (13.0-0 allows 13...♘d7! 14.f5 ♖c4= as in Bokros – Maslik, Slovakia 2014) 13...gxf6 14.f5 ♖c4 15.♖xc4 ♖xc4 16.0-0-0±

12...exf4N has not been tried but is worth checking: 13.♖xf6 gxf6 14.0-0 ♘xd3 15.cxd3 f5

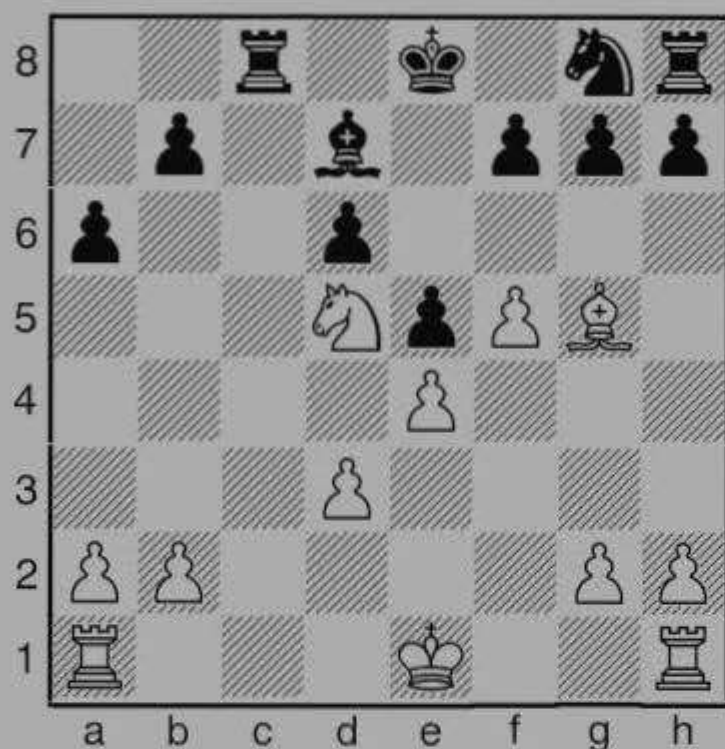




16.exf5 (16.♖xf4 fxe4 17.♗xe4 should favour White as well)  
 16...♗xf5 17.♖xf4 ♗xd3 18.♖d1 ♗g6 19.♖xd6 With ♖b6 and ♖fb4 on the way, Black is not in time to defend the b7-pawn.

13.f5 ♗xd3† 14.cxd3 ♗d7 15.♗d5 ♖c8

It's important for us to avoid a knight exchange here.  
 That's why I like:



16.♗b6

16.♗d2 can be met by 16...♗f6! as the doubled pawns will not hurt Black.

16...♖c6 17.♗e3 ♗f6 18.♗d2 g6 19.♖hf1±

White has a nice bind, and the following attempt to free Black's position does not work:

19...♗g4 20.♗xd7!

20.♗g1 ♗xh2! would be annoying.

20...♗xd7 21.fxg6 fxg6 22.♖f7† ♗e6

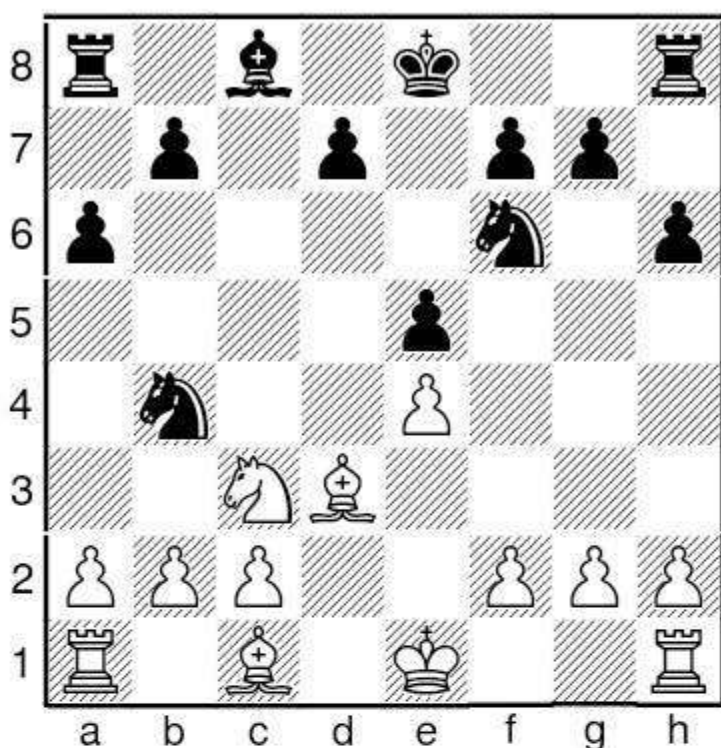
22...♗c8 23.♗g1±



23.♖af1! ♜c2† 24.♔e1+–

The black king is stuck in an amazing mating net.

## A22) 10...h6!?



It makes a lot of sense for Black to prevent ♗g5.

## 11.♗e3 ♜xd3†

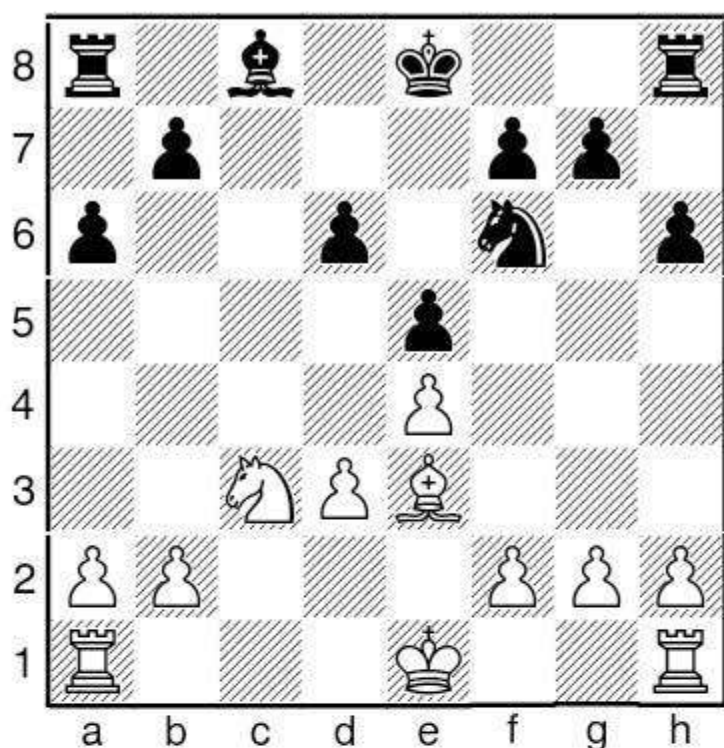
11...d6 12.0-0-0 ♗e6 13.a3 ♜xd3† 14.♖xd3 ♔e7 15.♖hd1 ♖hd8 16.♗b6 ♜d7 17.f3± reached a one-sided position, which White converted with smooth technique in Nisipeanu – Polgar, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

## 12.cxd3 d6

Black has done surprisingly well from this position, but I think this is largely because the games have not featured particularly strong players. White's plan should be simple: he will easily take over the centre with f2-f3 and d3-d4, and eventually d4-d5. By the way, this variation is covered from Black's perspective by Palliser in a *Dangerous Weapons* chapter, but the d4-d5 plan is not discussed in much detail there. The resulting structure is characteristic of the Spanish, and the weakness of the d6-pawn should continue to haunt Black for a long time, even if the rooks are



exchanged. White can also advance on the kingside, although that isn't particularly required. The main thing White needs to care about is keeping Black's counterplay at bay.



### 13.f3 0-0

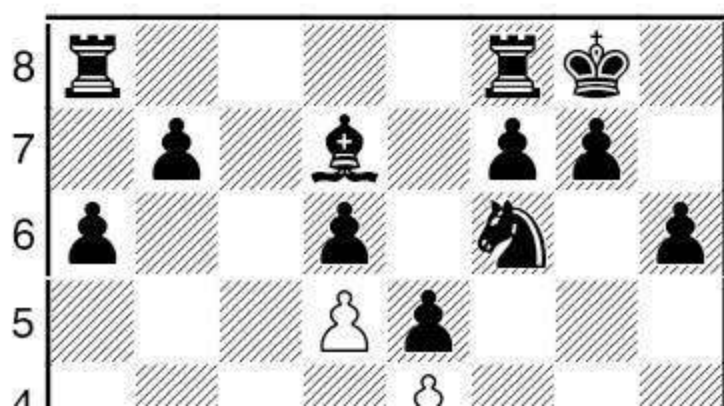
Black has tried other moves, but he almost always castles within a move or two, thereby transposing to lines covered below.

### 14.d4 ♖d7!?

14...exd4? 15.♗xd4 gives us a clear advantage.

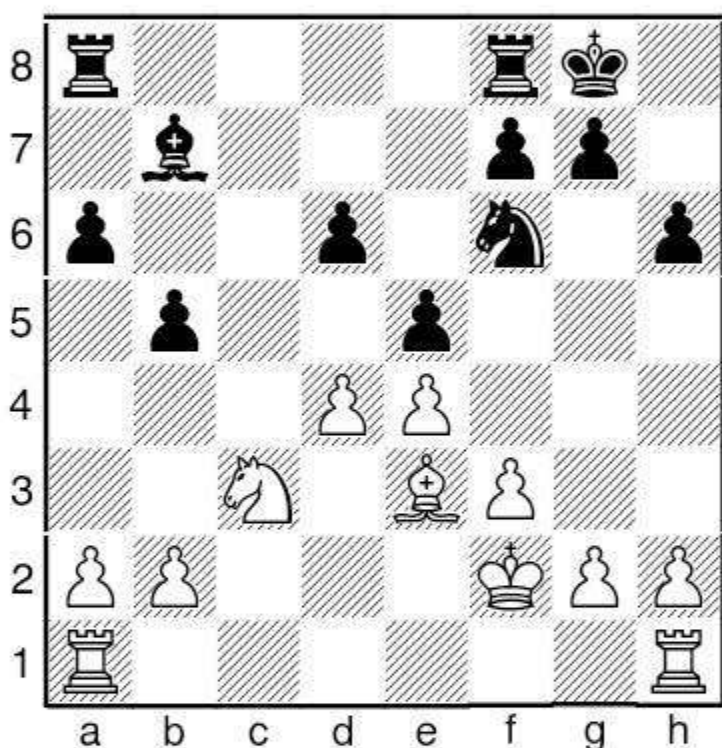
14...♗e6 just hands us a free move: 15.d5 (15.♔f2 allows the extra option of 15...exd4!N, although even here 16.♗xd4 ♞d7 17.♖hd1 also looks more pleasant for White) 15...♗d7

Elias Alvarez – Alfonso Jose, Bogota 2004.

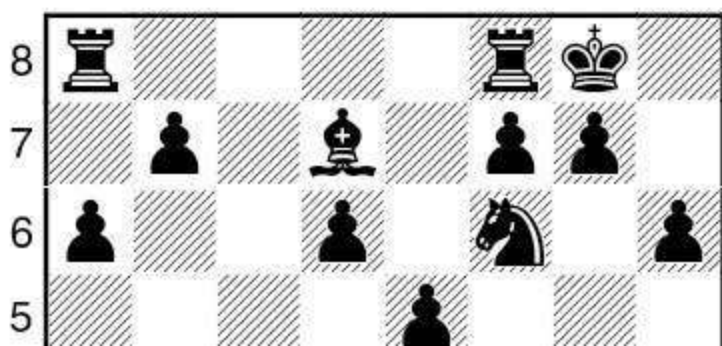


16.♔f2!N It looks more natural to put the king on d2, but the reason for the text move will soon be revealed. 16...♘h7  
 17.g4! I want to prevent any counterplay with ...f5. The king should be on f2 to ensure that ...♘g5 jumps will not trouble us. 17...♖fc8 18.♗hc1±

14...b5 is a strange choice; the bishop will be particularly poor on b7 because it will just be staring into a solid pawn chain after d4-d5. 15.♔f2!N (15.g4 followed by 0-0-0 was the wrong plan in Zagrebelny – Iailian, Soviet Union 1984)  
 15...♕b7



16.♖ac1!? (16.d5 also guarantees White a long-term edge)  
 16...exd4 (16...♖fc8 17.♘e2±) 17.♗xd4 ♘d7 18.♖hd1± Black's pawn structure is clearly not ideal, and his bishop will remain bad even after ...f5, which will be met by the simple exf5.





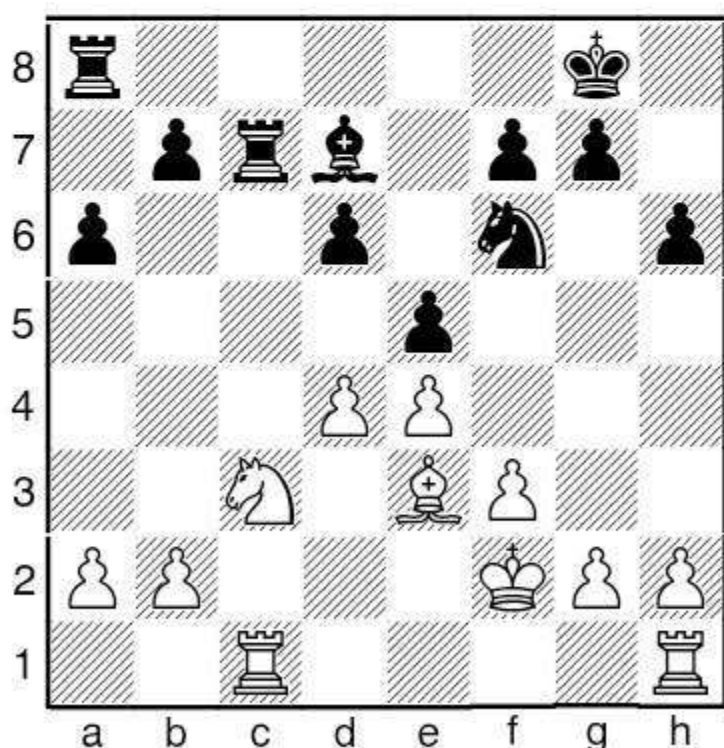
Returning to the main line, Black's last move is a logical choice, considering that we probably want to play d4-d5 at some point anyway. I found a game, Kopera – Skreno, Slovakia 2014, in which White went for 15.0-0, but it makes much more sense to keep the king in the centre. The most precise continuation is:

## 15.♖c1!N

We should wait for Black to determine his plan before deciding whether to put the king on d2 or on f2.

After 15.♔d2!?N 15...b5 16.♖ac1 b4 17.♞e2 a5 the king isn't ideally placed for plans involving dxe5. White's position seems preferable all the same, but it would be even better to have the king on f2 in this type of structure.

15.♔f2!?N, on the other hand, is met by 15...♖fc8 16.♖ac1 ♖c7! when we are essentially forced to exchange the rooks right away, and Black will get ...exd4 at the end, which is not my ideal outcome. Play continues:



17.♞e2 (After 17.d5 ♖ac8 we can't exchange rooks as Black is ready to invade on c2; 17.g4!? could be considered, but I would prefer to manage without this sort of thing) 17...♖ac8

18.♖xc7 ♖xc7 19.♖c1 ♖xc1 20.♘xc1 exd4 21.♙xd4 ♘e8 White can certainly try to squeeze something out of this ending, but we don't have to allow Black to simplify the game to this degree.

### 15...♖fc8

After checking the above lines, the way to meet 15...b5 should be obvious: 16.♘e2 b4 (16...♖fc8 17.♔f2!±) 17.♔f2! a5 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♖c5±

### 16.♔d2!

Now the king plays a key role on the queenside, as it effectively stops Black from doubling his rooks.

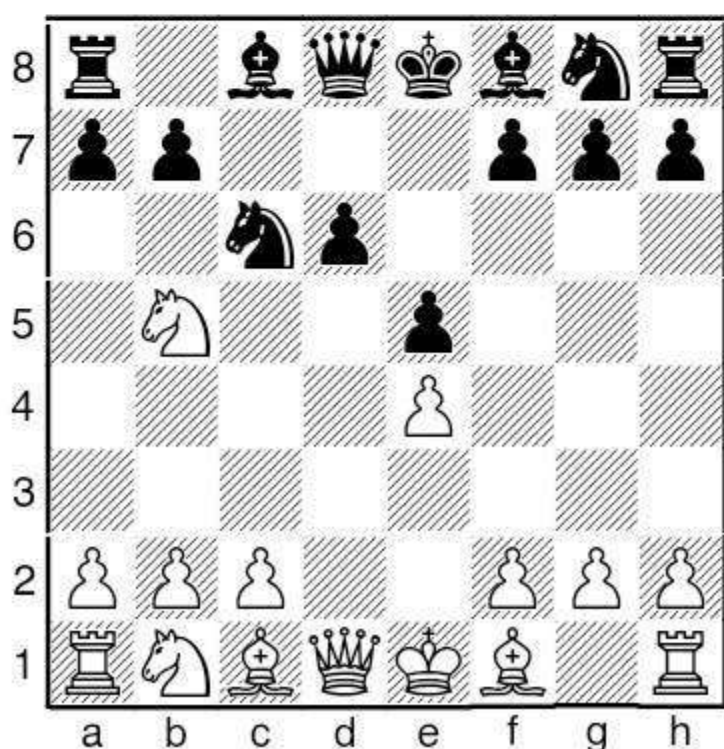
### 16...b5

16...♖c7?! 17.d5 ♖ac8 18.♙b6! embarrasses the rook: 18...♖c4 19.b3 ♖b4 20.♙a5 ♖d4† 21.♔e3±

### 17.♘e2 b4 18.♖xc8† ♖xc8 19.♖c1 ♖xc1 20.♘xc1±

The queenside advances have seriously weakened Black.

### B) 5...d6



Despite being less popular than its famous cousin found



Despite being less popular than its famous cousin found in the final part of the book, the so-called Kalashnikov is a part of many players' repertoires.

## 6.♘1c3

6.c4 is the other main move, which takes the game in a completely different direction. The text move aims to develop quickly and, just as importantly, more closely resembles the pattern of development you might associate with playing against other Sicilian variations – especially the Sveshnikov. If Black plays ...♘f6 at various points we may transpose to the Sveshnikov, so we will of course focus on the other possibilities.

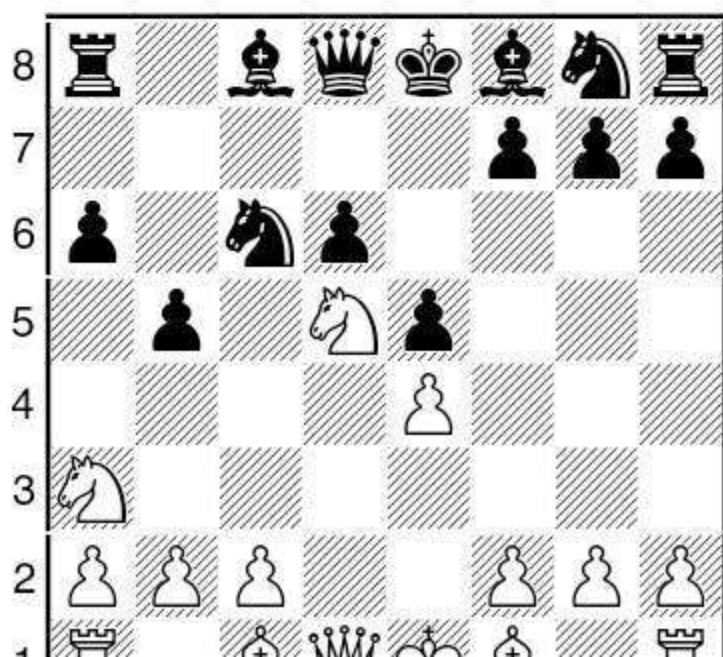
## 6...a6 7.♘a3

This brings us to a major branching point. Both 7...♙e6 and 7...♙e7 have become quite popular in recent years, and we will examine these moves in the following chapter. In the rest of this chapter we will deal with the other major option.

## 7...b5

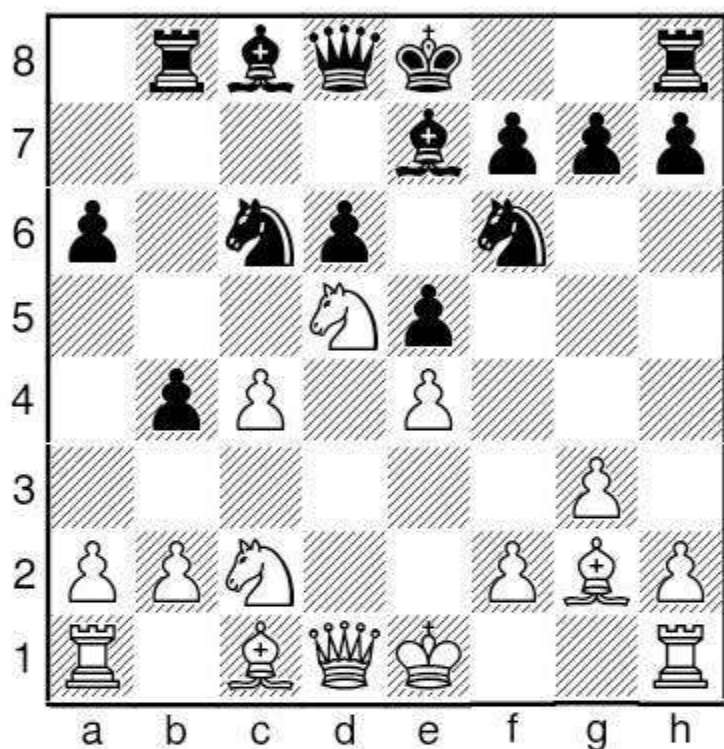
This is currently less fashionable but overall it has been the most popular choice, so it should be studied carefully.

## 8.♘d5



This standard move centralizes the knight and prepares c2-c4. We will analyse **B1) 8...♘f6**, **B2) 8...♘ce7** and **B3) 8...♘ge7**.

8...♞e7 is well met by 9.c4 b4 10.♞c2 ♖b8 11.g3 ♘f6 12.♞g2 with a pleasant position for White – it resembles a major line of the Sveshnikov, but here White has not had to swap his dark-squared bishop for the knight on f6. One game continued:



12...♘xd5 13.exd5 ♘a5 14.b3 ♞f5 15.♞d2 ♞xc2 16.♔xc2 0-0 17.a3 bxa3 18.♞xa3 ♘b7 19.♞xa6± Ootes – Pap, Leiden 2015.

### B1) 8...♘f6

This gives White the option of transposing to a Sveshnikov with 9.♞g5, but the resulting position falls outside of our repertoire. Fortunately there is another good move available.

### 9.c4

This is a standard weapon against the Kalashnikov.

### 9...b4



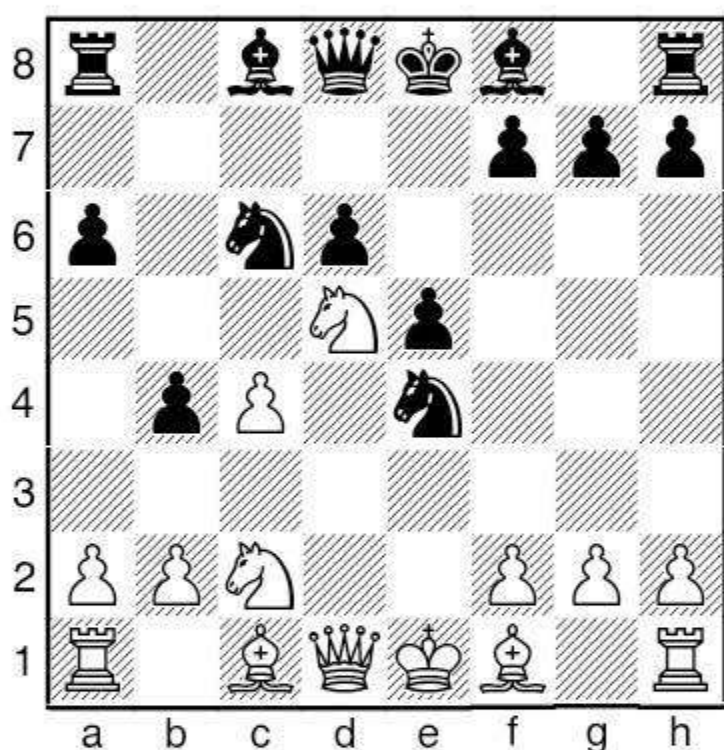
This is the only independent move of any real importance.

Both 9...♘xd5 and 9...♘d4 10.♙d3 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 are covered under the 8...♘ge7 move order – see variation B3 below.

### 10.♘c2!?

White has a pleasant choice, as 10.♘xf6† ♔xf6 11.♘c2 gives a slight plus. The text move offers a promising pawn sacrifice which is interesting to analyse further.

### 10...♘xe4



### 11.g3!N

It is strange that this has not yet been played, as the bishop will be fantastic on the long diagonal.

### 11...♙e7

11...♙b7 12.♙g2 ♘c5 13.0-0 a5 14.f4 gives White a strong initiative.

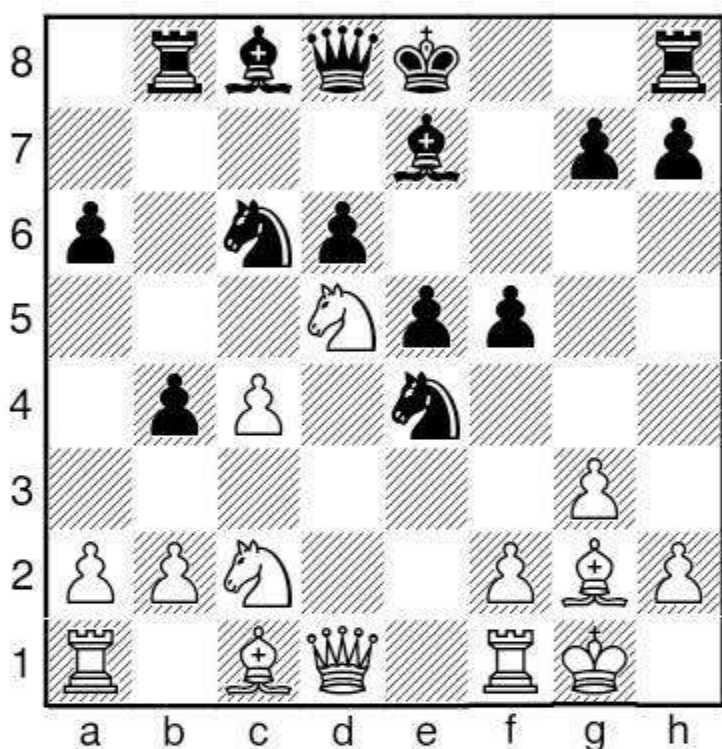
11...♔a5 is a critical move to consider, but we have a perfect answer: 12.a3! b3† (12...bxa3† 13.b4±) 13.♘cb4 ♘xb4 14.axb4! ♔xa1 15.♘c7†

15...♔d8 (In the event of 15...♔d7 16.♘xa8 the queen cannot escape via a4) 16.♙g5† ♞xg5 17.♙xa1 ♔xc7 18.♙a5† ♔d7 19.♙g2 Materially Black is fine, but the weak king will be his undoing. 19...♖b8 20.b5±

## 12.♙g2 f5 13.0-0 ♖b8

13...a5 runs into 14.g4! 0-0 15.gxf5 ♙xf5 16.♘de3!+- and Black drops a piece.

13...0-0 is not so bad, but 14.♘cxb4 ♞xb4 15.♘xb4 sees White regain the pawn with a pleasant advantage.

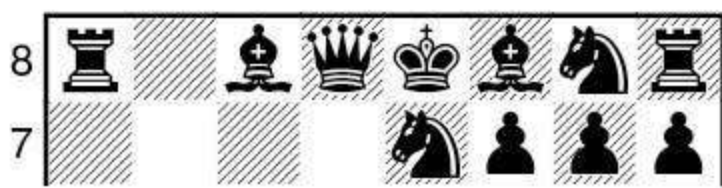


After the text move Black holds everything together, but his position remains quite fragile. Despite the missing pawn, White can just continue playing normal moves without hurrying to regain material.

## 14.a3 bxa3 15.♖xa3 0-0 16.f3 ♘c5 17.b4 ♘e6 18.f4±

White has an excellent position.

## B2) 8...♘ce7





Black wants to eliminate the knight, without then having to spend a tempo moving the knight from c6 after White recaptures on d5. The drawback, of course, is that the rest of his pieces remain undeveloped.

**9.c4 ♖xd5 10.exd5 bxc4 11.♖xc4 ♖f6**

**11...♗e7**

This sometimes transposes, but we should also see what happens if Black goes for a quick ...f5.

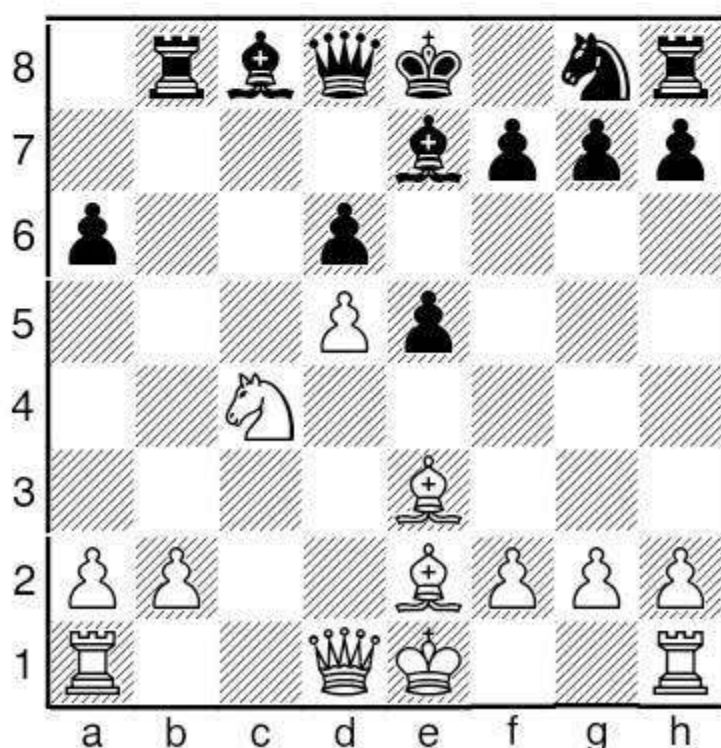
**12.♗e3**

12.♗d2!? has been popular recently. The idea is to try and exploit some differences in the position compared to 11...♖f6, but I don't see any special reason to go down this route. The text move is simpler and will most likely transpose to our main line.

**12...♞b8 13.♗e2!**

This is an important move-order subtlety.

13.a4 f5! 14.♞c1 ♖f6 15.♗a7 ♞b7 16.♗b6 ♔d7 17.♗a5 0-0 18.♖b6 ♗d8!! is a wonderful resource which maintains the balance and shows why White should develop the light-squared bishop first.



13...f5?!

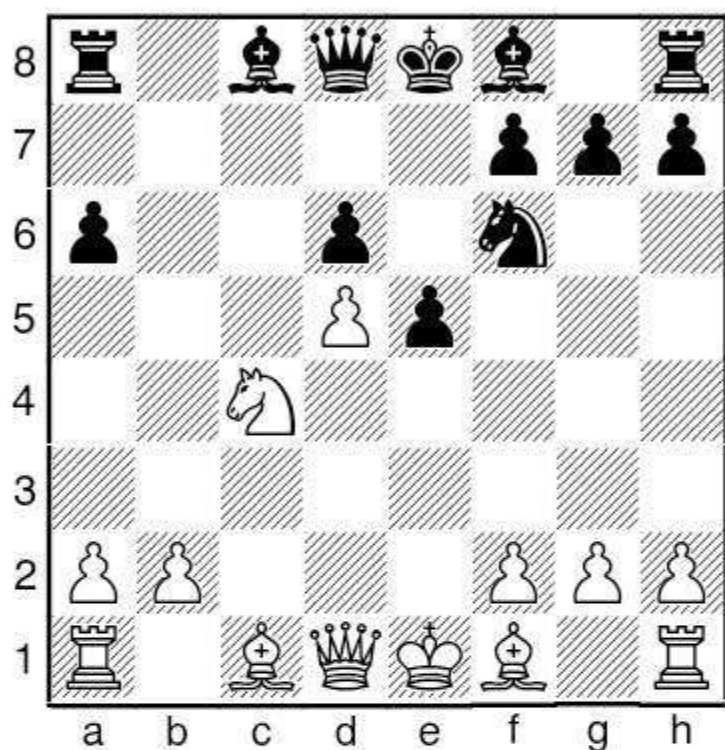
Black should prefer 13...♘f6, when 14.a4 transposes to the main line below.

14.♖c1 ♘f6 15.♙a7! ♜b7 16.♙b6 ♔d7

16...♞xb6 17.♘xb6±

17.♙a5 ♜b8 18.♘b6 ♔b7 19.♞c6±

Valentine – Rawlings, Internet 2005.



12.♙e3

After 12.♙d2 a5 13.♔b3 ♙d7 Black is doing fine.

12...♞b8

12...♙e7!? is occasionally seen, as ♘b6 and ♙b6 are not immediately threatened. Still, it is hard for Black to do without the rook move indefinitely. 13.♙e2 0-0 14.0-0 Now 14...♘d7 15.b4± favours White, so almost all games have continued 14...♞b8 transposing to our main line.

13.♙e2 ♙e7 14.a4

14.0-0 0-0 15.a4 is the same thing.

14...0-0 15.0-0

At first, Black doesn't seem to be doing badly in terms of



the pawn structure, but he has problems in finding good squares for his pieces. His only active plan revolves around ...f5, but it won't cause us too many headaches as we can meet it by putting our pawn on either f3 or f4. Aside from that, White's plan involves a mix of ideas such as putting a piece on b6 and taking over the c-file, or perhaps sending the knight to a5 and c6.

## 15...♗b7

By forcing the knight to b6, Black at least avoids the ♔d2/♘a5 plan. A few other examples:

15...♗f5?! just places the bishop uselessly. 16.a5 ♖b5 17.♘b6 ♜xb2 18.♗xa6± Levacic – Popchev, Podgorica 1991.

15...a5?! turns the pawn into a severe weakness. 16.♗d2 ♖a8 17.♔e1 ♞xd5 18.♗f3 ♗e6 19.♗xa5± Szoen – Slezak, Krynica 2003.

15...♞d7 16.♔d2! f5 17.♘a5 prepares to invade on c6. White does not need to worry about 17...f4?! 18.♗a7 ♖a8 19.♞c6 ♔e8 20.f3 leaves him clearly better.

## 16.♘b6 ♞d7

16...♔e8 doesn't change much after 17.a5 ♗d8 18.♗c4 ♞d7 19.♔a4± as in Aroshidze – Ynojosa Aponte, Figueres 2013.

16...♞e8 17.a5 f5 has occurred a few times. My preferred continuation is:





18.f4N 18...♖f7 (18...g5?! 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.b4 f4 21.♙c5±) 19.b4 exf4 20.♙xf4 ♙g5 21.♙c4±

It seems more logical for Black to challenge the knight on b6, but it doesn't drastically alter the position, and we can just continue with our queenside plans.

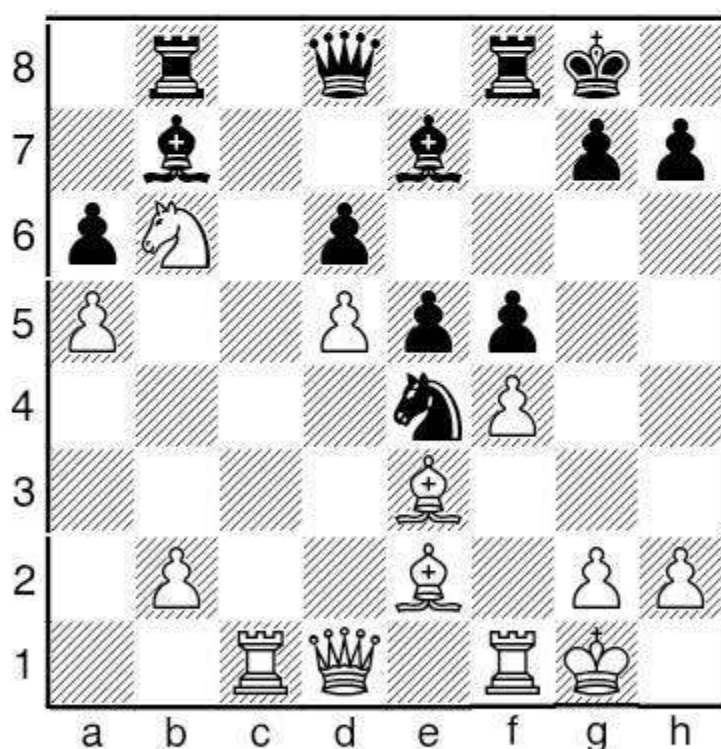
### 17.a5 f5 18.♖c1!?

White has a near-perfect score from here. Please note that we don't have to play f2-f3 or f2-f4 yet because of the nice little trick mentioned below.

### 18...♔e8!?

After 18...f4 19.♙g4! ♞f6 20.♙e6† ♔h8 21.♙d2± White's light-squared bishop became a monster in Vasquez Schroder – Ynojosa Aponte, Cochabamba 2013.

18...♞f6 19.f4 ♞e4 is more logical, when White should play:



20.fxe5!N (20.♙f3 exf4 21.♙xf4 ♙f6 22.♙xe4 fxe4 23.♔d2 ♔e7 was not so clear in P.H. Nielsen – Palo, Denmark 2003) 20...dxe5 21.♙d3 White has a greedy but effective plan: 21...♞d6 22.♔e2 and the a6-pawn falls.





### 19.f3!

Black's set-up is aimed against 19.f4 exf4! 20.♙xf4 ♘xb6 21.axb6 ♙a8 22.♙e3 ♙d8! when the b6-pawn falls.

The text move easily avoids the tactical trick, while the uncertainty over Black's future plans persists.

### 19...♙d8

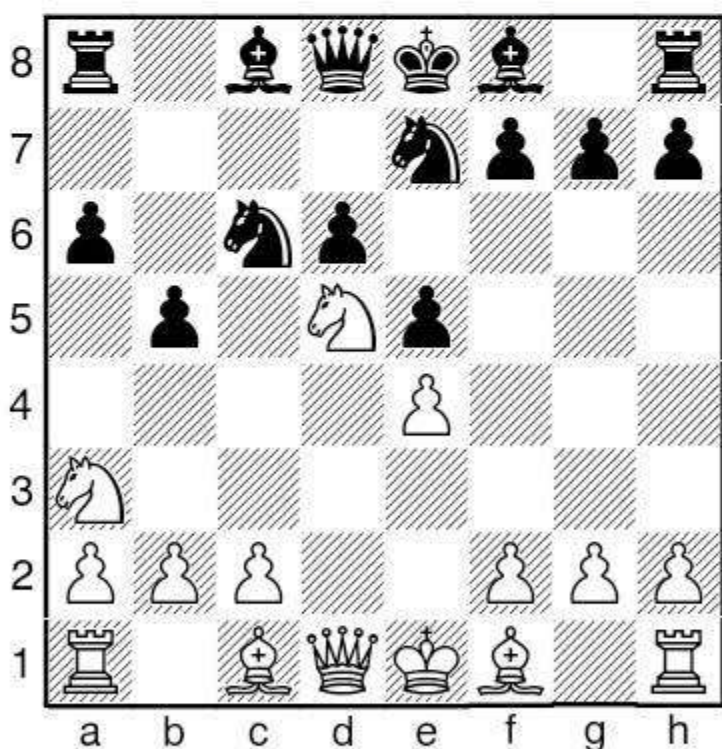
This position has occurred in a few internet games. White has more than one decent move, but my preference would be:

### 20.♙d2N 20...♘f6

20...♘xb6?! 21.axb6 ♙a8 22.♙a5±

### 21.b4±

### B3) 8...♘ge7



This is the most important of the three main options.

### 9.c4

9.♙g5!? h6 (9...f6 10.♙e3) 10.♙xb5 axb5 11.♘xb5 is an über-complicated line, with 11...f6!? 12.♘xf6† gxf6 13.♘xd6†

♙xd6 14. ♖xd6 hxg5∞ being one recent example, Mozharov – I. Popov, Voronezh 2014. Although this could be interesting to play and analyse, I don't see any need for it.

After the text move, the majority of games have seen White recapture on d5 with the e-pawn, in order to be able to win a pawn on the queenside with cxb5. This is certainly a critical way of playing, but it is double-edged and highly theoretical. Instead I would like to propose a much simpler plan of recapturing on d5 with the c-pawn and playing for a more stable positional edge.

## 9...♘d4

9...♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘d4 11.♙d3 transposes.

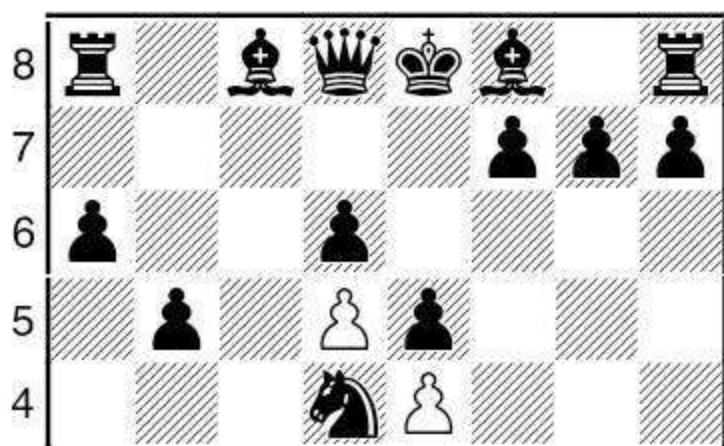
## 10.♙d3

10.♙e3 will lead to similar positions, but I don't think ♙e3 is strictly necessary in the upcoming structure with cxd5, so the text move is more flexible. In certain cases we will put the bishop on e3 anyway, but in other cases this piece will have better prospects on d2.

## 10...♘xd5

10...bxc4 forces White to lose a tempo, but it is still something of a positional concession. A possible continuation is 11.♙xc4 ♙b7 12.0-0 ♘xd5 13.♙xd5 ♙xd5 14.exd5 ♙e7 15.♙e3 ♘f5 16.♖c1 0-0 17.♖c6! and White keeps the upper hand.

## 11.cxd5





Black must decide how to develop his kingside, the choices being **B31) 11...♗e7** and **B32) 11...g6**.

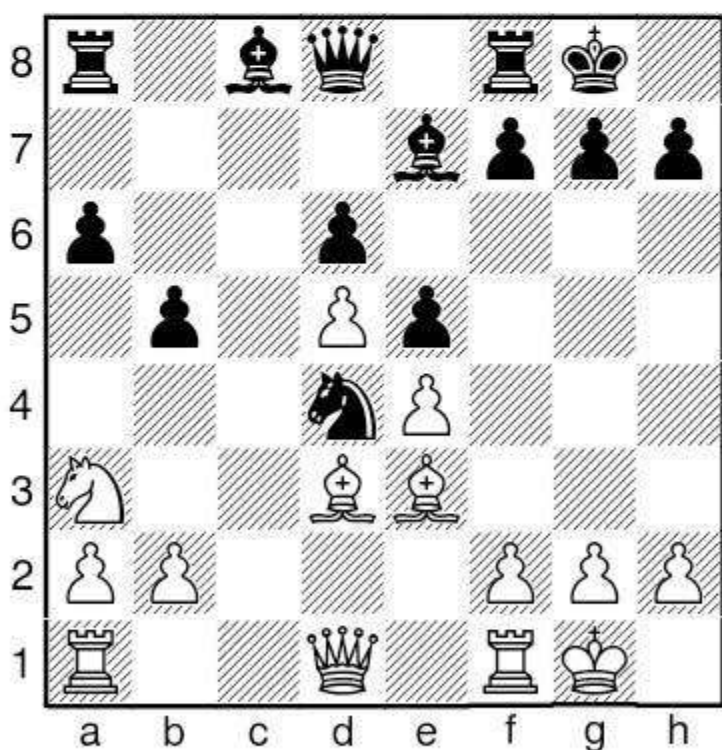
11...f5 seems premature, and the simple 12.♘c2!? gives White a good position.

### **B31) 11...♗e7**

Generally, the bishop seems to belong on g7 in these positions. The only advantage to the text move could be seen after an early knight exchange on c2, when White's plan often revolves around plonking his queen on a3 and bishop on b4. As you will see later, that may prove highly unpleasant when the bishop is on g7, whereas here it does not threaten the d6-pawn. Accordingly, we should avoid an early ♘c2.

### **12.0-0 0-0 13.♗e3!**

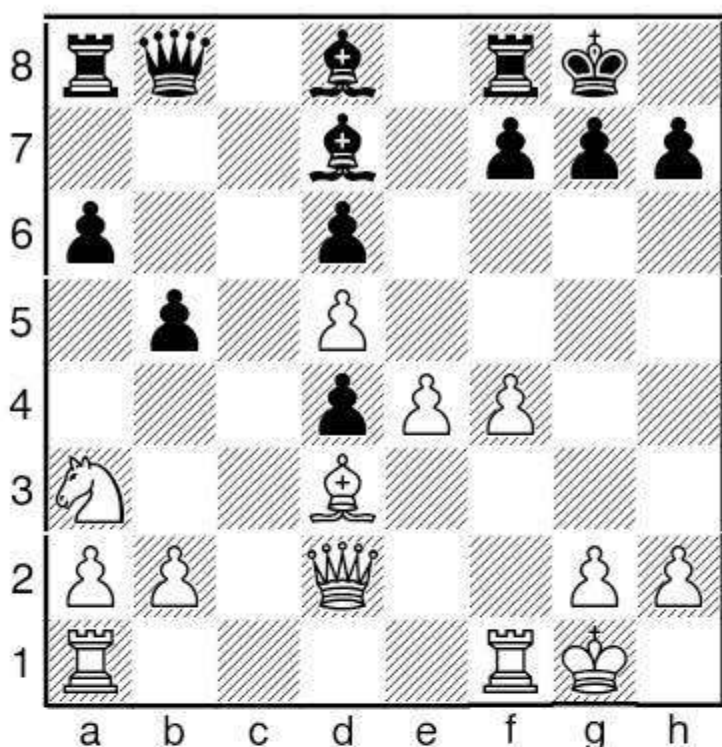
White's ideas include f2-f4 and ♖c1, and of course Black must consider the possibility of ♗xd4 at every turn.



### **13...♗f6**

Another plausible continuation is: 13...♗d7 14.♙d2 This flexible move keeps all options open. (White can also consider the immediate 14.f4!? ♖c8 15.♗xd4 exd4 16.♘c2

♙b6 17.a3 f5 18.♚h1 fxe4 19.♗xe4± as in Lanka – Skoberne, Austria 2015) 14...♙b8 15.f4 ♖d8 16.♗xd4 exd4



17.♗c2 ♖f6 18.♗e1!? N↑ I find this new idea particularly appealing, as the knight may support a kingside initiative from f3. However, White has several promising plans. (18.♖ae1 ♖e8 19.♙f2 ♚h8 20.♚h1 ♙b6 21.♖e2± was another good example, Dominguez – El Gindy, Tromso 2013.)

The text move has been played in quite a lot of games, but it is obviously not a fun plan for Black, as his sole idea of activity with ...f5 has been blocked. White can just continue developing and play ♗c2 at an appropriate time to get a simple edge.

#### 14.♙d2 ♖d7 15.♖ac1

15.♙b4 was played successfully by Delchev, but this plan is less effective when Black's bishop is on f6.

15.f4?! needlessly gives Black counterplay after 15...exf4 16.♖xf4 ♗e5, with ideas of ...f5 or ...♙h4. We should time f2-f4 more carefully to avoid this sort of thing.

#### 15...♖c8



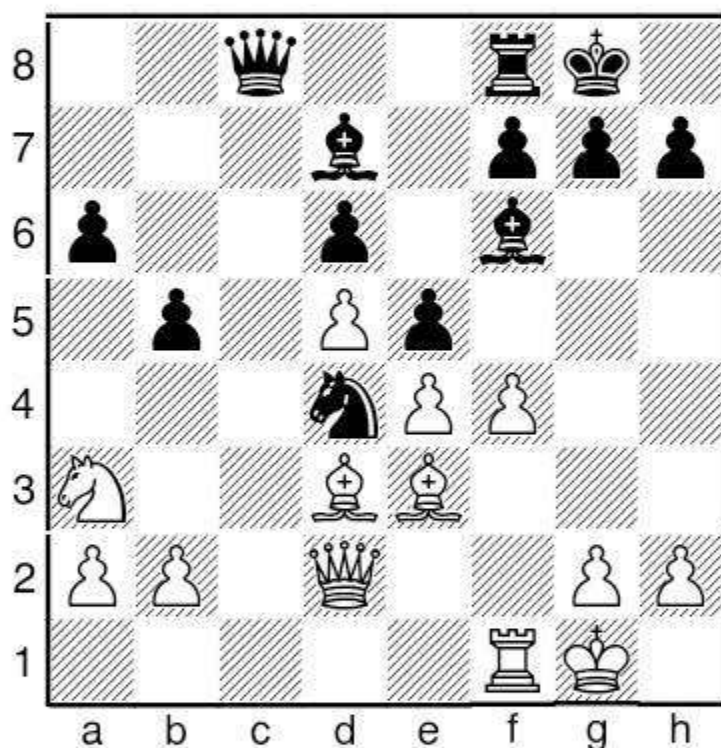
After 15...♔b6 16.f4!N the pin makes Black's life awkward: 16...exf4 17.♖xf4 ♕e5 18.♖cf1 ♔d8 19.♗f2±

## 16.♖xc8 ♔xc8

16...♕xc8 17.♖c1 ♕d7 18.♘c2 ♘xc2 19.♖xc2 ♔b8 20.♗a5 ♖c8 21.♗xa6±

## 17.f4!N

A major improvement over Stripunsky – Votava, Mlada Boleslav 1995, in which White preferred the automatic 17.♖c1. The text move is perfectly timed, as having the queen on c8 considerably reduces Black's counterplay after ...exf4 and ...♕e5 because there will be no ...♗h4.



## 17...♕e7

17...exf4? 18.♖xf4 ♕e5 is unplayable, as after 19.♖f2 Black's knight is about to be trapped: 19...f5 20.♕f1+–

## 18.♕xd4!?

White has a pleasant choice, another good option being 18.f5 followed by advancing the kingside pawns.

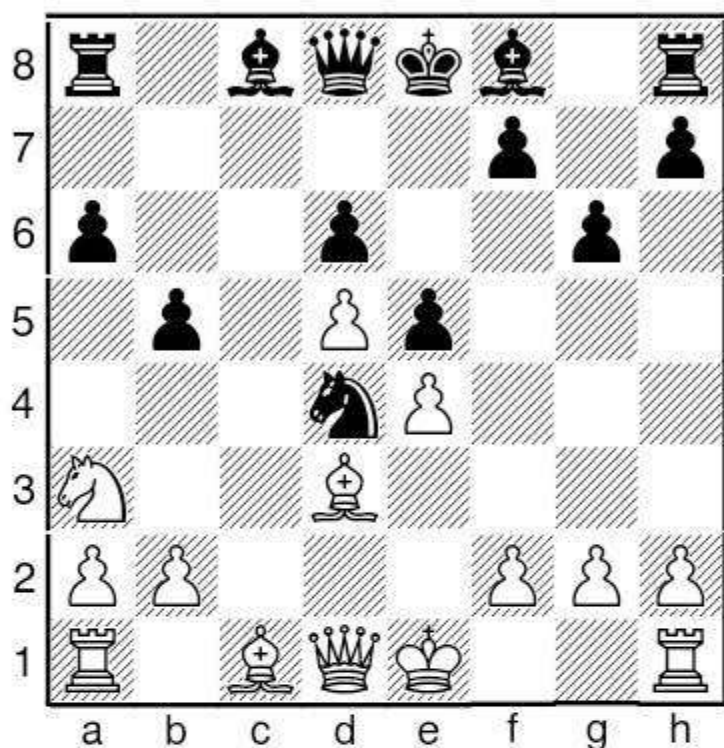
## 18...exd4 19.♘c2 ♕f6 20.♘e1±

The knight is heading to f3, where it will support a

kingside pawn assault.

### B32) 11...g6

Black has done quite well with this set-up, but I believe this has mostly been due to White players getting confused by the multitude of possible plans, whereas Black just intends to finish developing and prepare ...f5.



### 12.0-0 ♖g7 13.♘c2

13.♙e3 0-0 14.♘c2 has been a more popular move order, but I would rather give Black the opportunity to go wrong by exchanging on c2.

### 13...0-0

White should be happy to see the knights exchanged:  
13...♘xc2 14.♙xc2 ♙d7 15.♙d2!

15.♙b3 was the grandmaster's choice in Belov – Maze, Biel 2008, but the text move is more accurate. The queen will certainly go to b3 and a3 at some point, but it is useful to provoke ...♗c8 along the way.





15...0-0 16.♖ac1 ♜c8

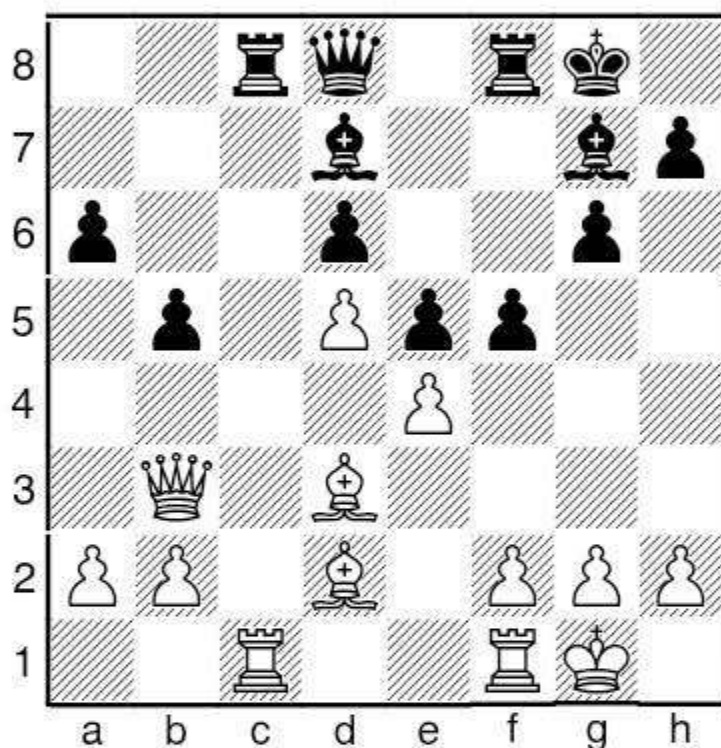
Both 16...♖b6 and 16...a5 would allow the unpleasant 17.♖c7±.

17.♖b3

Intending ♖a3 and ♗b4. The queen and bishop are perfectly placed to control the queenside and exert pressure against Black's pawn weaknesses.

17...f5

In Ogleznev – Kernazhitsky, Kiev 2011, White exchanged rooks, but a stronger move is:



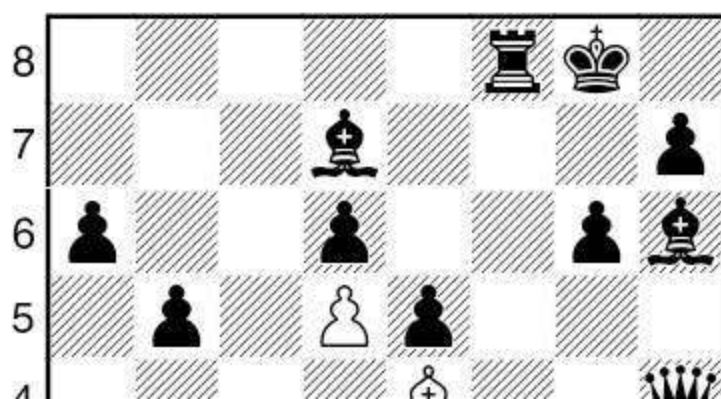
18.♖a3!N 18...fxe4

Black's only chance is to go for kingside counterplay.

18...♖b6 19.♗e3 ♖b8 20.♖xa6±

18...♖e7 19.♗b4 ♜xc1 20.♜xc1 fxe4 21.♗xe4±

19.♗xe4 ♜xc1 20.♜xc1 ♖h4 21.f3 ♗h6



22.♙e1!?

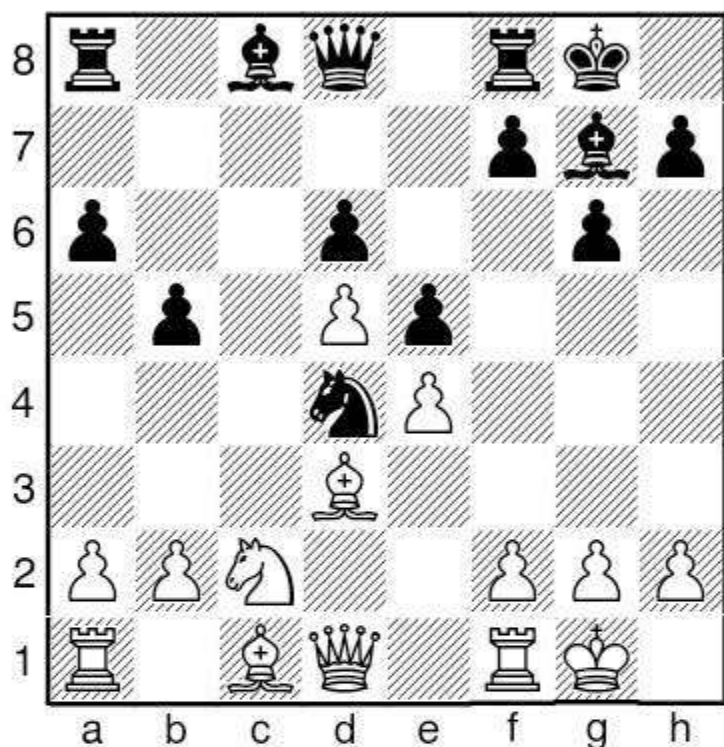
Otherwise the weak dark squares might have been a problem.

22...♚e7 23.♖c7 ♖c8 24.♖c6!

Not entirely necessary, but a spectacular idea all the same.

24...♙xc6 25.dxc6=

A subsequent ♙f2 will block any counterplay, and Black will struggle to hold his queenside together.



14.♙e3

From this position Black has tried **B321)** 14...♚h8, **B322)** 14...♘xc2 and **B323)** 14...♙d7.

14...f5? 15.♙xd4 exd4 16.exf5 ♙xf5 (16...gxf5 17.♘b4±)

17.♙xf5 ♖xf5 18.♘xd4 ♖xd5 19.♚b3+– shows why Black needs to put the king on h8 before trying anything fancy.

**B321) 14...♚h8**





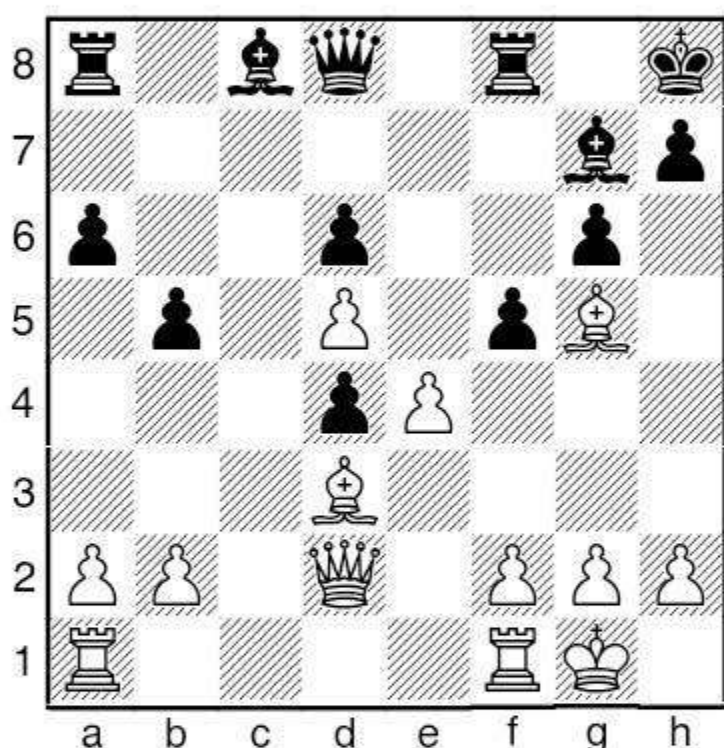
Radjabov used this move to draw with Nakamura, but White has several promising continuations.

## 15.♖c1

15.♔d2!? is another good move, when Black may try:

a) 15...♘xc2N 16.♔xc2 is similar to variation B322 below. Obviously the free ...♔h8 move should help Black slightly, but I don't see it making a big difference in the assessment.

b) 15...f5 has been played, but 16.♘xd4!N 16...exd4 17.♙g5 would be annoying for Black:

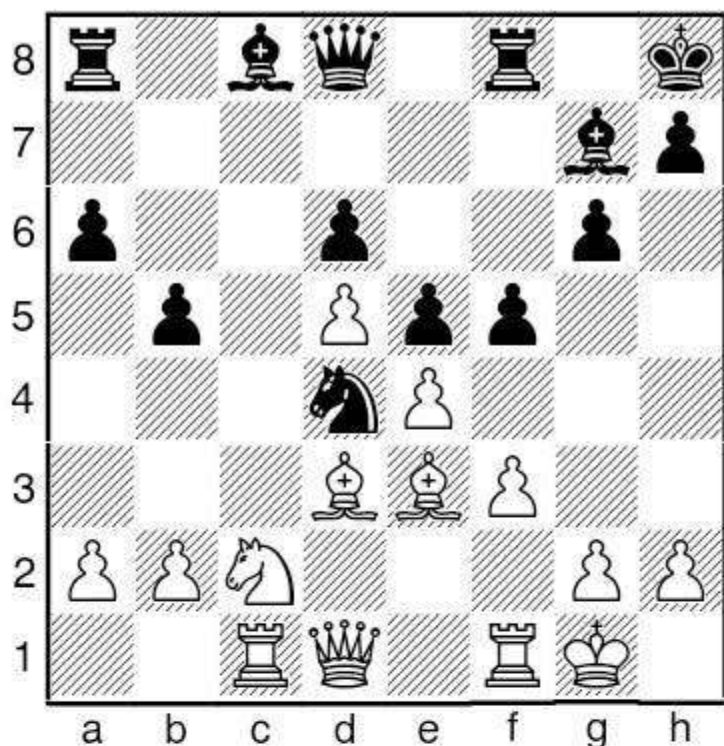


17...♔b6 (17...♙f6 18.♙xf6† ♔xf6 19.exf5 ♙xf5 20.♙xf5 gxf5 21.a4±) 18.♖ac1!? (18.♖fe1± is also good) 18...fxe4 (18...♙d7 19.exf5!±) 19.♖c6 ♔b8 20.♙xe4 ♙d7 21.♖cc1±

## 15...f5 16.f3

If White wants to take the game in another direction, he can consider 16.♙xd4!?N 16...exd4 17.exf5 ♙xf5 18.♙xf5 ♖xf5 19.♘b4 followed by plonking the knight on d3. Of course the computer thinks that Black is okay after winning the d5-pawn, but after 19...a5 20.♘d3 ♖xd5 21.♔e2 it feels to me as though White might actually have better practical chances

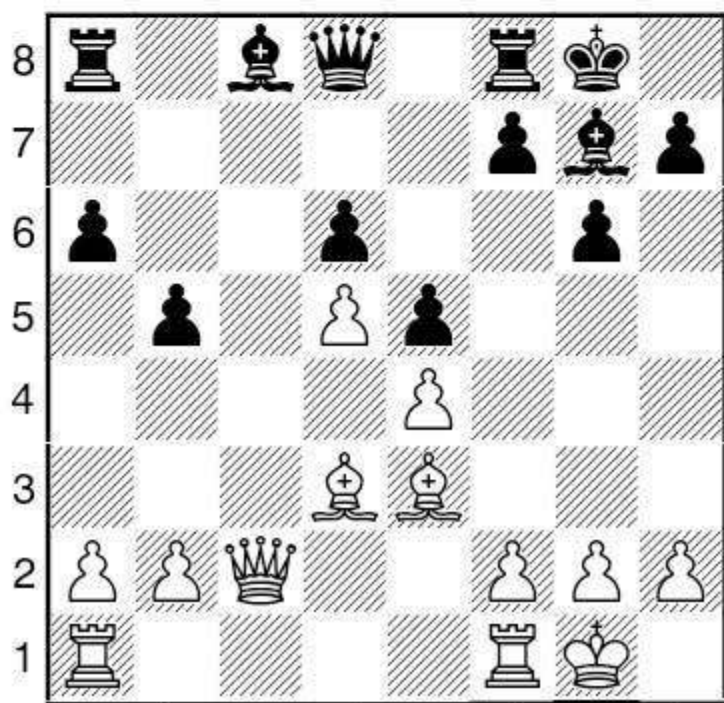
due to the excellent d3-knight versus the bad g7-bishop.



**16...d7 17. d2 f4 18. f2 g5 19. dxd4 exd4**

Nakamura – Radjabov, Medias 2011. Although Radjabov was able to draw with a fortress after losing the d4-pawn, I am not sure how many players would wish to defend such a one-sided game. And if you are not satisfied with this as White, you can go for one of the other options mentioned in the notes to moves 15 and 16.

**B322) 14...xc2 15. xc2**





This time we see Black delaying ...♘xc2 until White has played ♕e3, so he does not have to worry about the troublesome ♕d2-b4 plan that we saw earlier.

### 15...♕d7 16.♖ac1

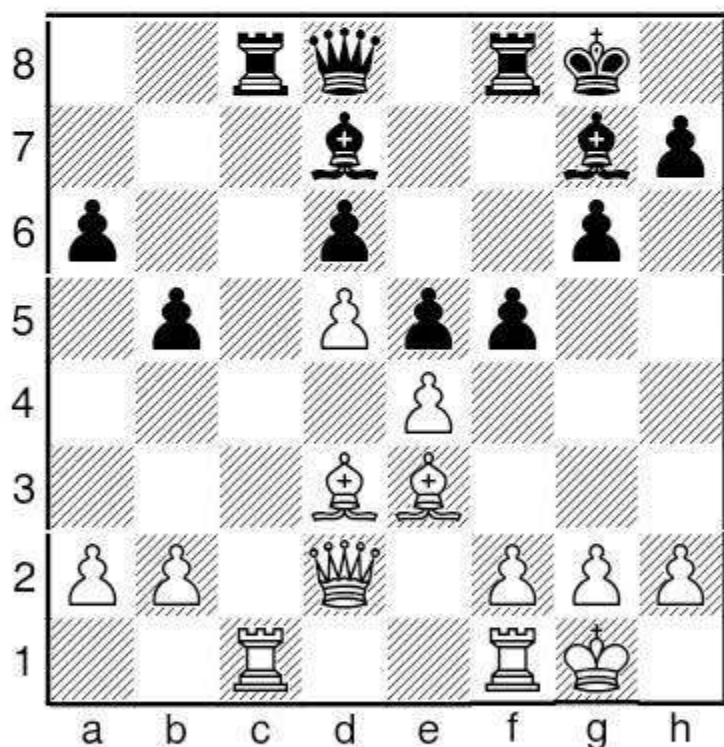
16.♖fc1!? could also be considered, but I am satisfied with the improvement I found for White in the main line below.

### 16...♖c8 17.♔d2!

The queen is heading for a3, but it takes a long route in order to prevent ...♔a5.

17.♔b3 would have been the ideal plan, but Black has 17...♔a5! (17...f5? 18.♔a3±) 18.f3 f5 19.a3 f4 20.♕f2 g5 21.♔b4 ♖xb4 22.axb4 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8 24.♖a1 ♖a8 with equality.

### 17...f5



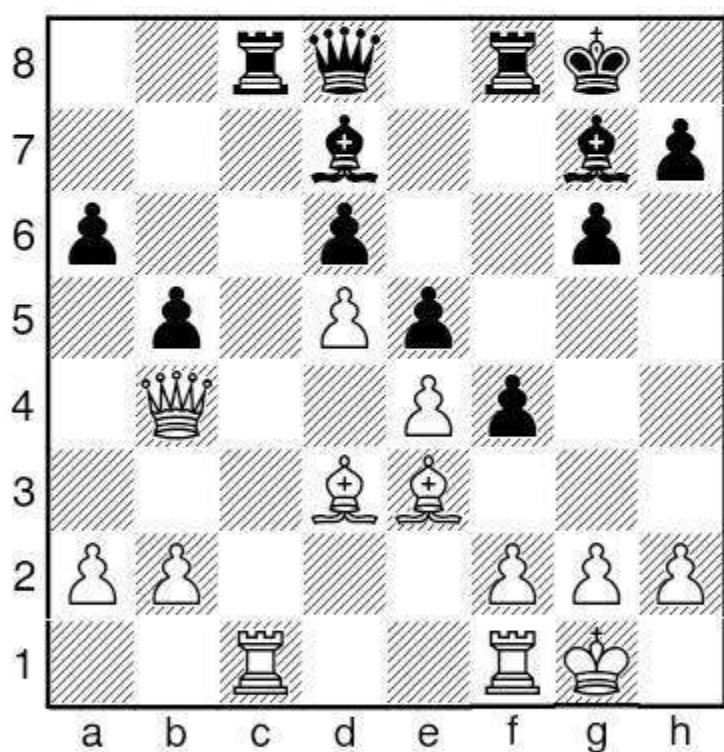
### 18.♔b4!N

To understand the importance of this move, we should briefly check the game continuation: 18.f3 f4 19.♕f2 ♕f6 20.♖xc8 (20.♔b4 ♕e7! is one important idea behind putting the bishop on f6. 21.♔a3 ♖a8!∞) 20...♖xc8 21.♖c1 ♔b8 22.♔a5 ♖c8= Cawdery – Naiditsch, Deizisau 2014.

The problem in the above line was that Black was given time to regroup with ...♙f6!, which gave him time to meet the ♖b4 threat with ...♙e7. My idea is therefore to save a crucial tempo by omitting f2-f3. As we will see below, allowing ...f4-f3 is only visually scary – in reality, Black will be far too slow to create any serious mating threats. Moreover, the structure after ...f3 and g2-g3 will make any subsequent endgame a major risk for Black, as the f3-pawn might easily be captured.

## 18...f4

18...♙e7 gives White more than one good continuation: 19.♖a3! (19.f3!? could be considered if you really want to play it, as Black no longer has the ...♙f6-e7 plan available. At the same time, f2-f3 still doesn't seem necessary.) 19...f4 20.♙d2 f3 21.g3 h5 (21...♙h3 22.♖fd1±) 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖c1±



## 19.♖xc8!

This intermediate move forces Black to make an unpleasant decision.

19.♙d2 ♖b6 20.♖a3 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♖c8 22.♖xc8† ♙xc8 23.♙a5 ♖d4 should be defensible for Black.

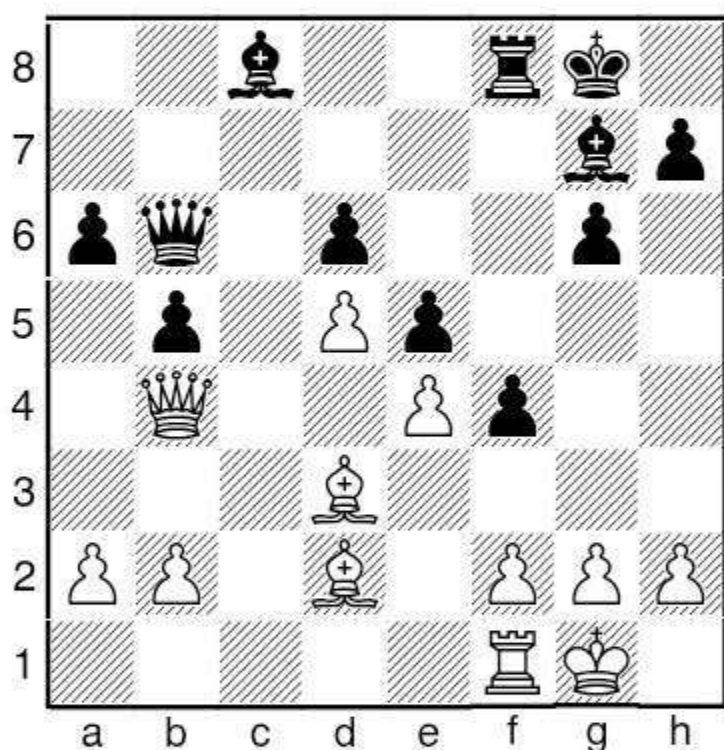


## 19...♙xc8

19...♙xc8 20.♙b6 ♖b8 21.♙a5! ♖b7 (21...♖c8 22.♙xa6±)  
22.♙c7 ♖f6 23.♖c1±

## 20.♙d2 ♖b6

After 20...f3 21.g3! the kingside is completely safe, despite the dangerous-looking pawn on f3. 21...♙d7 22.♖c1 ♙b7 23.a4± Since the f3-pawn would be weak in an endgame, Black will find it hard to challenge for the c-file. Instead he will have to bet everything on a desperate kingside attack, which seems unlikely to succeed, since ...♙h3 can easily be parried by ♙f1, while all other attacking plans will take a long time.



## 21.a4!? ♙d7 22.axb5 ♙xb5

22...axb5 23.♖a1±

## 23.♖c1±

Black is under significant pressure on the queenside.

## B323) 14...♙d7



This could be seen as an attempt to gain time on Naiditsch's plan by delaying ... $\text{xc2}$ . Rather than waiting for Black to carry out that idea, we will take the play in a different direction.

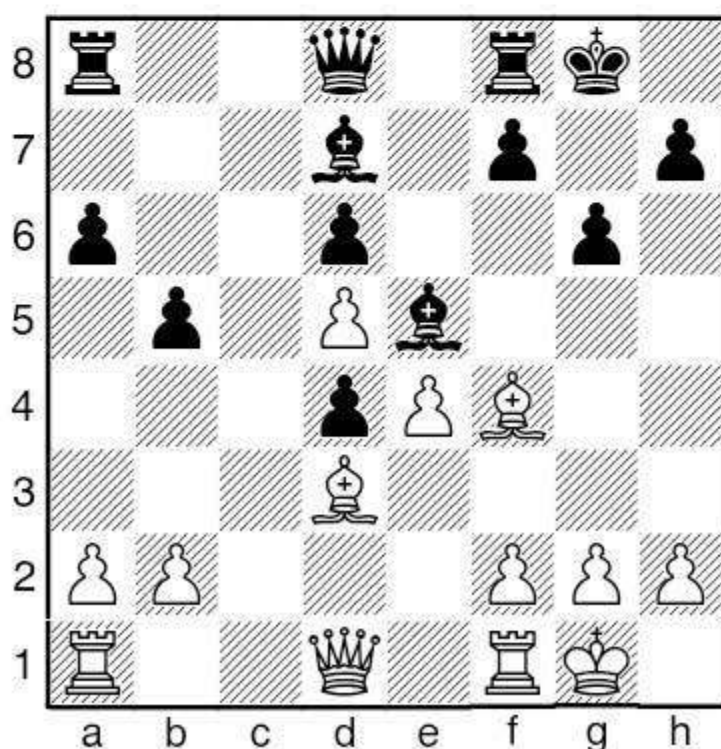
### 15. $\text{xc4!}?\text{N}$

15.  $\text{c1 c8}$  16.  $\text{xc4 exd4}$  was agreed drawn in Van der Wiel – Wiersma, Leiden 2010. There was no need to agree a ceasefire so early, but in any case I would prefer to swap on d4 immediately.

### 15... $\text{exd4}$ 16. $\text{f4 g e5}$

16...  $\text{e7}$  places the queen on a slightly dodgy square, making it harder for Black to carry out the ...f5 plan. For instance, 17.  $\text{d2 f5}$  18.  $\text{ae1}\pm$  obviously favours White.

16...  $\text{b6}$  is playable, but the queen does not have much to do on the queenside, particularly since the play might soon shift to the other flank. 17.  $\text{g4!}?$  White could play more slowly with moves like  $\text{ac1}$ ,  $\text{d2}$  and so on, but it looks tempting to highlight the drawback of Black's last move. 17...f5 18.  $\text{exf5 gxf5}$  19.  $\text{g5}\pm$



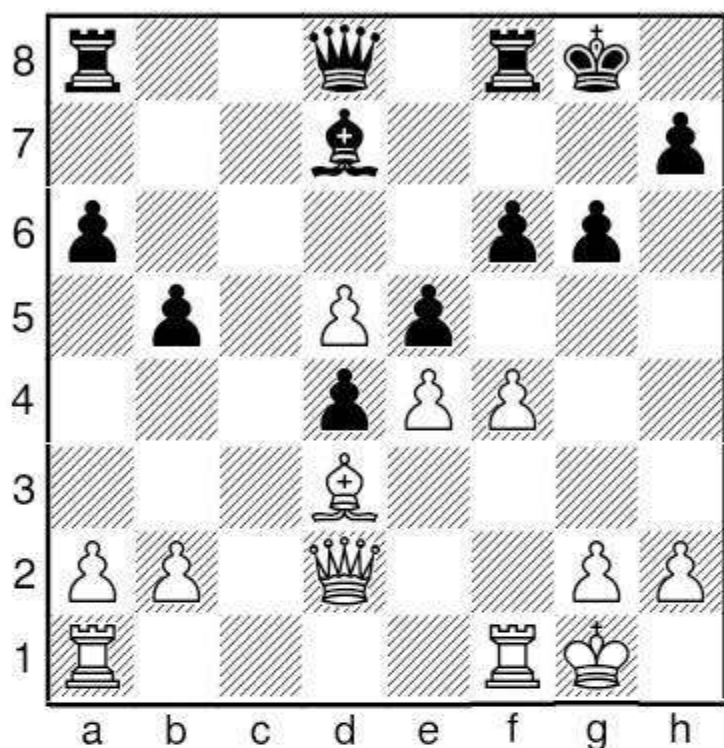
### 17. $\text{xe5!}?$



17.♙d2 f5 18.f4 ♗g7 19.exf5 ♗xf5 20.♙xf5 ♖xf5 21.♙f3 d3!  
is rather unclear.

17.♙d2 is a sensible alternative though, and keeps more options open.

**17...dxe5 18.f4 f6 19.♙d2**

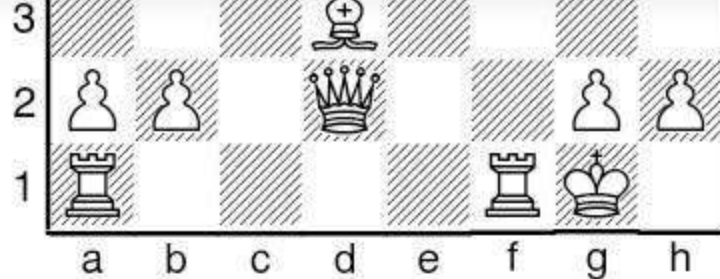


Despite the near-symmetrical structure, White has more options available on the kingside. He might double rooks, and can prepare either h2-h4 or g2-g4 when the time is right. Black, on the other hand, is reduced to the role of a waiting spectator. Apart from keeping an eye on the kingside, he must also take care to prevent the white queen from infiltrating through the dark squares on the queenside.

## Conclusion

The Lowenthal is a playable but slightly inferior variation, and after 5...a6 6.♘d6† ♗xd6 7.♙xd6 ♙f6 8.♙xf6 ♘xf6 9.♘c3 ♘b4 10.♗d3 White should keep a pleasant edge by relatively simple means. You don't have to remember too much theory here, although it is worth playing through the lines to get a feel for the different plans and small details such as





Despite the near-symmetrical structure, White has more options available on the kingside. He might double rooks, and can prepare either h2-h4 or g2-g4 when the time is right. Black, on the other hand, is reduced to the role of a waiting spectator. Apart from keeping an eye on the kingside, he must also take care to prevent the white queen from infiltrating through the dark squares on the queenside.

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Most of the chapter was taken up by the 7...b5 variation of the Kalashnikov, which is rather more challenging. The basic rule for White is to play 8.♘d5 and follow up with c2-c4, after which a few different central structures may occur. The main line is 8...♘ge7 9.c4 ♘d4, offering the b5-pawn as a gambit. Perhaps White can get an advantage by taking the bait, but I much prefer the simple route of 10.♙d3 ♘xd5 11.cxd5, leading to a stable structure where White sooner or later swaps off the d4-knight and gets a pleasant version of a King's Indian, where Black is more concerned with covering his queenside weaknesses than trying to mount an attack.



# Kalashnikov – 7...♖e6 and 7...♖e7

## Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d6 6.♘1c3 a6  
7.♘a3

A) 7...♖e6 8.♘c4

A1) 8...♜b8

A2) 8...b5

A3) 8...♘a5

B) 7...♖e7 8.♖e3 ♘f6 9.♘c4

B1) 9...♖e6 10.♘b6 ♜b8 11.♖e2

B11) 11...♘xe4

B12) 11...0-0

B2) 9...b5

A2) after 12...f5



13.a3!N

B12) note to 12...♘xe4



15.c4!N

B2) after 14...♘xe4



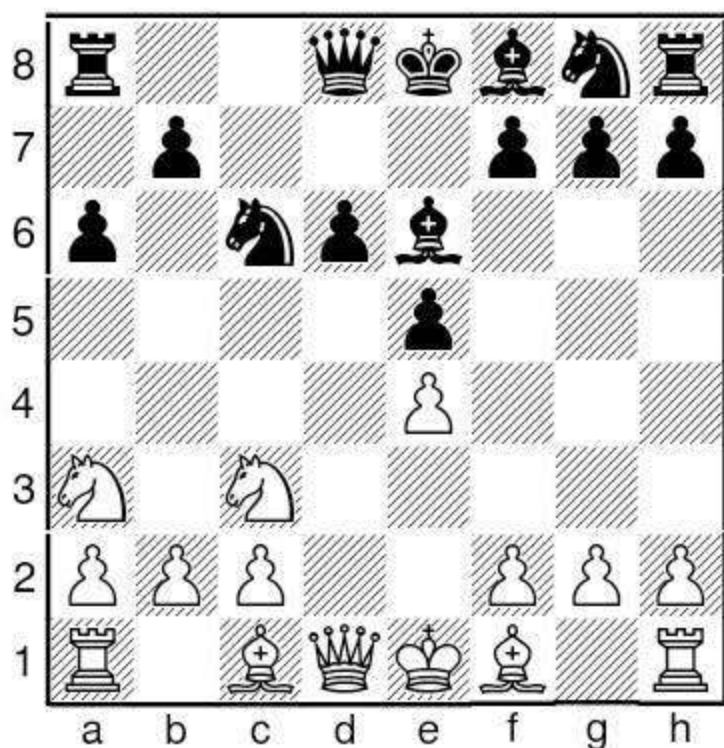
15.a4!N

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d6 6.♘1c3 a6**  
**7.♘a3**

Having dealt with 7...b5 in the previous chapter, we will now turn our attention to two bishop developments which

have become quite trendy lately: **A) 7...♗e6** and **B) 7...♗e7**.

### A) 7...♗e6

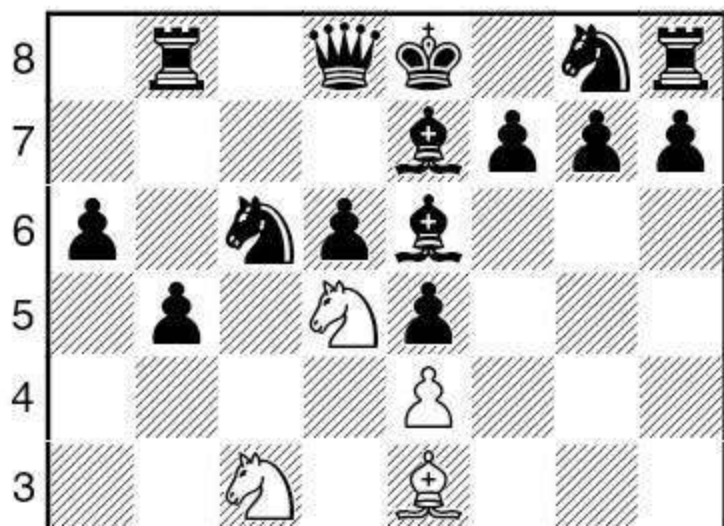


### 8.♘c4

White should take the opportunity to improve this knight while he has the chance. We will consider **A1) 8...♖b8**, **A2) 8...b5** and **A3) 8...♘a5**.

**8...♘f6 9.♗g5** transposes to variation B2 of Chapter 22.

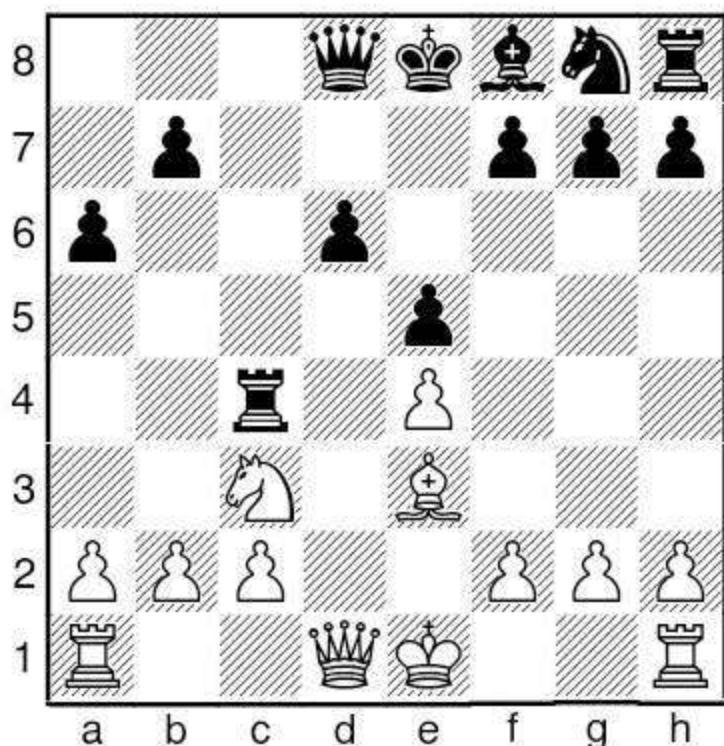
**8...♗e7 9.♗e3 b5 10.♘b6 ♖b8 11.♘bd5** shows White's ideal scenario: his knights are perfectly placed and a weakening of Black's queenside has been provoked. This was highlighted after:





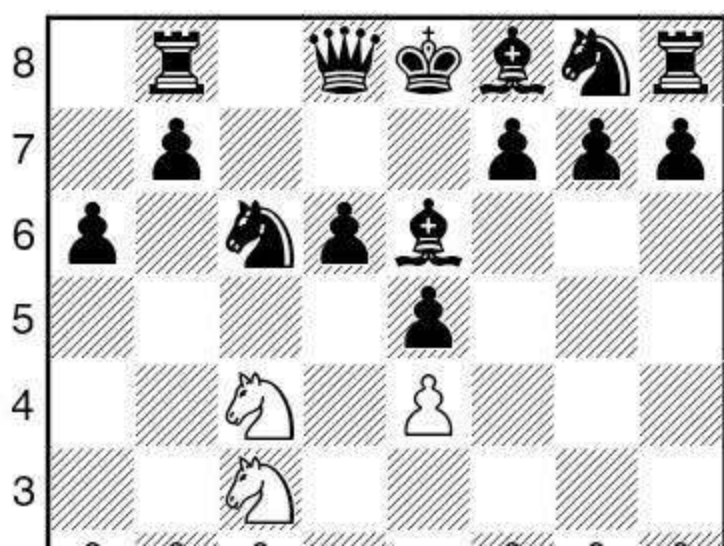
11...♘f6 12.a4! bxa4 13.♙xa6 ♞xe4 14.♙b5 ♔d7 15.♙xa4±  
 Alsina Leal – Munoz Pantoja, Badalona 2013.

8...♖c8 is met by 9.♙e3 when ♞b6 is a really annoying threat.  
 9...♞d4 is logical, but 10.♙xd4 ♙xc4 11.♙xc4 ♖xc4 12.♙e3  
 leaves White with a pleasant position anyway.



It's just a typical Sicilian structure, and the piece exchanges favour White because he gets easy play against the d6-pawn and the d5-outpost. 12...♘f6 13.♔d3 ♔c8 14.♙g5 ♖d4 15.♔e2 ♔g4 16.♔xg4 ♞xg4 17.h3 ♞f6 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♖d1± Palac – Sveshnikov, Murska Sobota 2006.

### A1) 8...♖b8



This move anticipates the ♖e3/♗b6 plan, and is more useful than the weakening ...b5 against ♖e3. Apart from that though, it is just a waste of time, and White has plenty of other plans available. I like the following idea:

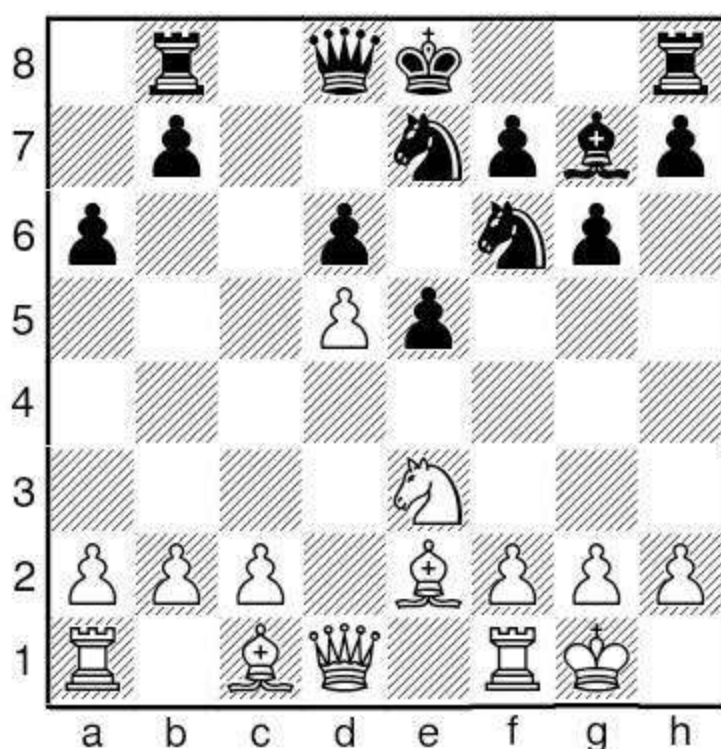
### 9.♗d5!? ♕xd5

After 9...b5 10.♗ce3 ♗f6 the simplest way to keep the advantage is: 11.♗xf6†N (11.♕d3 ♕e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.a4± was also pretty good in Asgari – Noroozi, Tehran 2014) 11...♔xf6 12.♗d5 ♔d8 13.a4±

### 10.exd5 ♗ce7 11.♕e2

Black has wasted additional time, and still has troubles completing development.

### 11...♗f6 12.♗e3 g6 13.0-0 ♕g7



### 14.b4 0-0 15.c4 ♗d7 16.♕a3!?

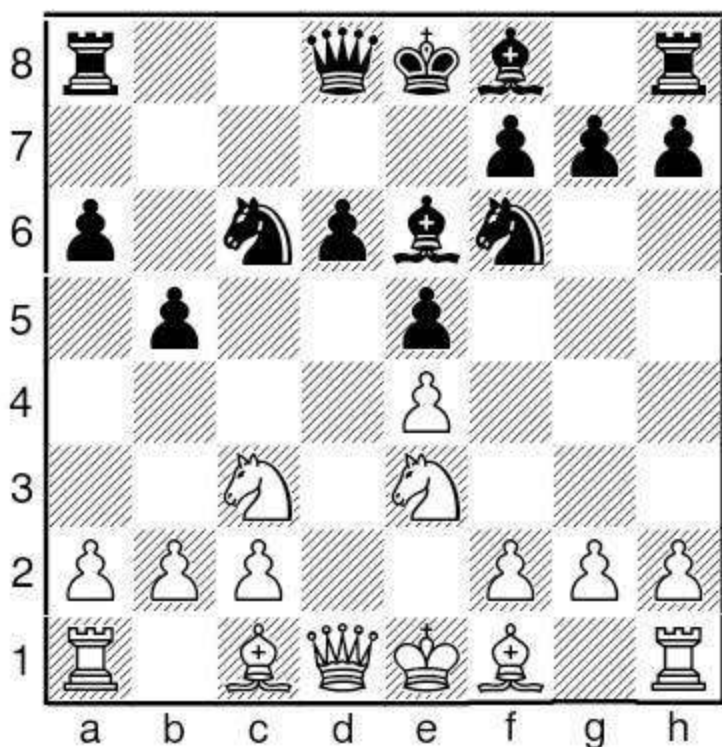
16.♕b2± is a perfectly good alternative, but the text move sets up a nice sequence.

### 16...b6 17.♖c1 a5 18.c5! axb4 19.cxd6 bxa3 20.dxe7 ♔xe7 21.d6±

Huschenbeth – Kalinitschew, Hamburg 2014.



## A2) 8...b5 9.♘e3 ♘f6



This line has been championed by Shirov. If White tries to save the e4-pawn then Black seems to be doing well – 10.a3 is too slow, while 10.♙d3 interferes with White's pieces, particularly in relation to a future ♘d5.

### 10.g3!

This is clearly the critical move. If White gets time for ♙g2 then his position will be great, so Black should grab the e4-pawn and hope for the best.

### 10...b4

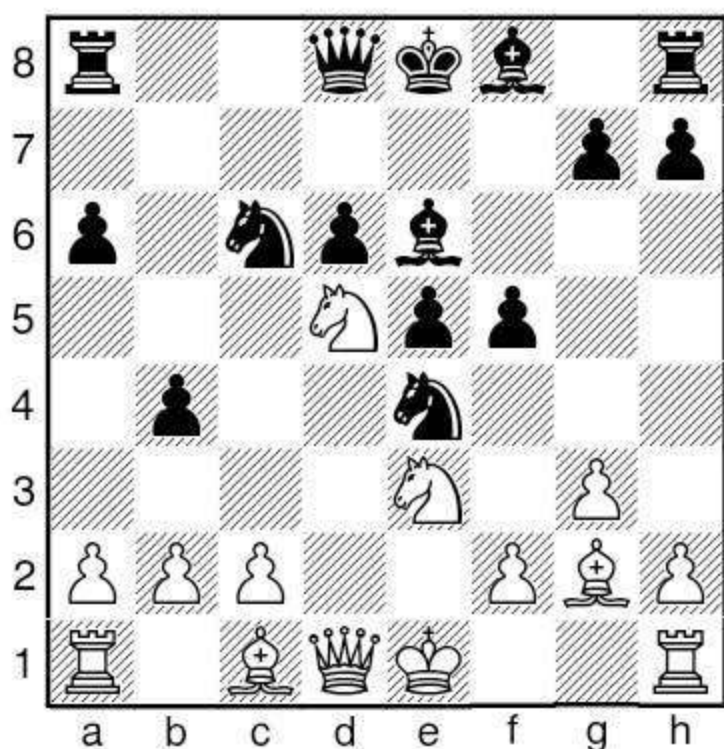
After 10...♖c8 11.♙g2 the following two games nicely illustrate White's chances:

a) 11...h5 is not too scary, and Shirov showed that he was a master of this variation from White's side too: 12.0-0 h4 13.♘cd5 ♘e7 14.♘xf6† gxf6 15.a4 b4 16.♙d3 ♙b6 17.a5 ♙a7 18.♖d1± Shirov – Bareev, Tilburg 1993.

b) 11...♙e7 12.♘cd5 ♘a5 13.b3 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♙xd5 15.exd5 The knight on a5 is just completely misplaced.

15...0-0 16.0-0 ♖g5 17.♙b2 ♞b7 18.b4 f5 19.c3 e4 20.♚e2 ♜b6 21.a4± Even though Black's structure on the kingside seemed impressive, White's queenside play and especially the misplaced knight were more relevant in Almasi – Sveshnikov, Porto Carras 2011.

11.♞cd5 ♞xe4 12.♙g2 f5



13.a3!N

Similar ideas were played in other games, but White didn't get it exactly right in any of them.

13.g4 g6 14.gxf5 gxf5 15.♚h5† ♔d7 16.♙h3 ♞d4! works out well for Black.

13.0-0 ♙e7 14.a3 bxa3 (It is worth noting that Shirov avoided 14...b3 15.c3; this is significant because the same structure could arise in our main line – see the note to Black's next move below.) 15.♞xa3 0-0 16.f4 g6 17.c3 exf4 18.gxf4 ♙h4 19.♞a4 ♞c5 20.♞c4 ½–½ Motylev – Shirov, Poikovsky 2014.

13...bxa3

13...b3 14.c3!?

As we saw in the note above, it seems Shirov did not



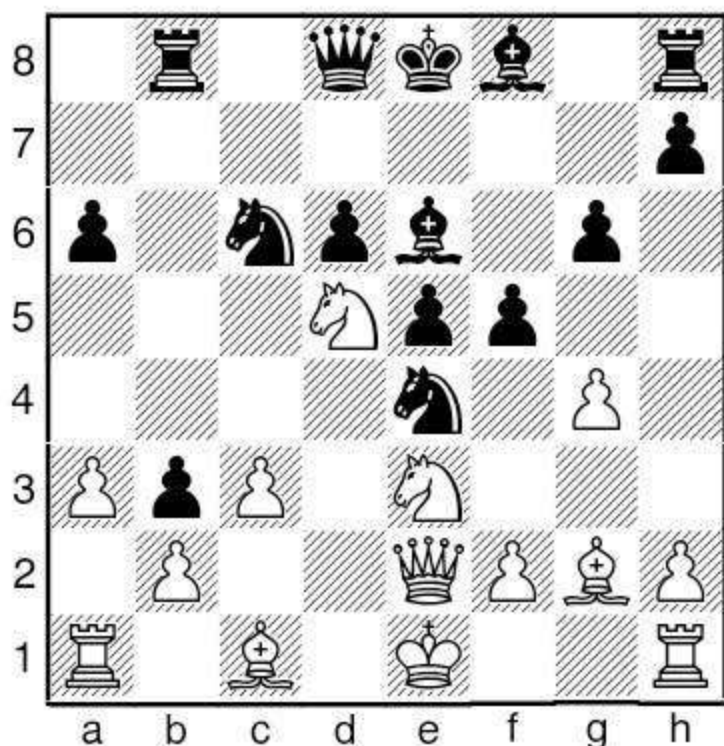
want to play this type of position – which is a good sign. Indeed, looks like White will regain his pawn with a fine game:

14...♖b8

14...♙e7 15.0-0 0-0 16.♙xb3 ♘c5 17.♙d1 e4 18.f3±

15.g4 g6 16.♙e2!

Exploiting the fact that ...♘d4 jumps are no longer possible.



16...♙c8

16...♙g7?! 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.♘xf5 ♙xf5 19.♙xe4±

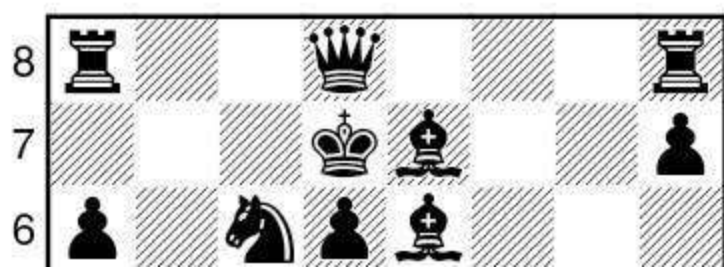
17.gxf5 gxf5 18.♘xf5±

White regains the pawn with a pleasant edge.

14.♙xa3 ♙e7 15.g4! ♙h4

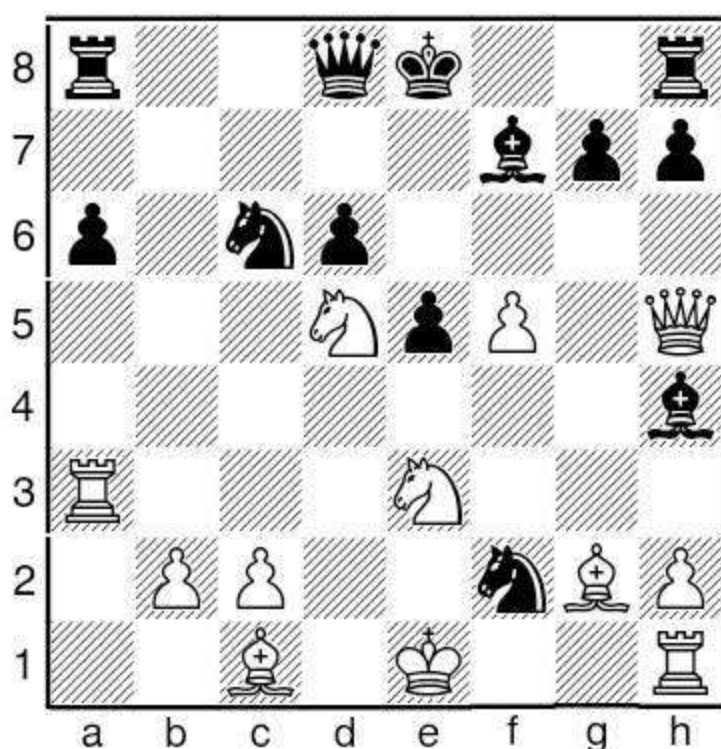
After 15...♘xf2 16.♙xf2 ♙h4† 17.♙g1 White's king is safe, so Black has nowhere near enough compensation.

15...g6 does not really work here: 16.gxf5 gxf5 17.♙h5† ♙d7



18.♙h3! ♘d4 (18...♖f8 19.♘xf5 ♙xd5 20.♘e3† ♙e6 21.♙xe6†  
♙xe6 22.♚g4†+-) 19.c3±

16.gxf5 ♘xf2 17.♚h5† ♙f7



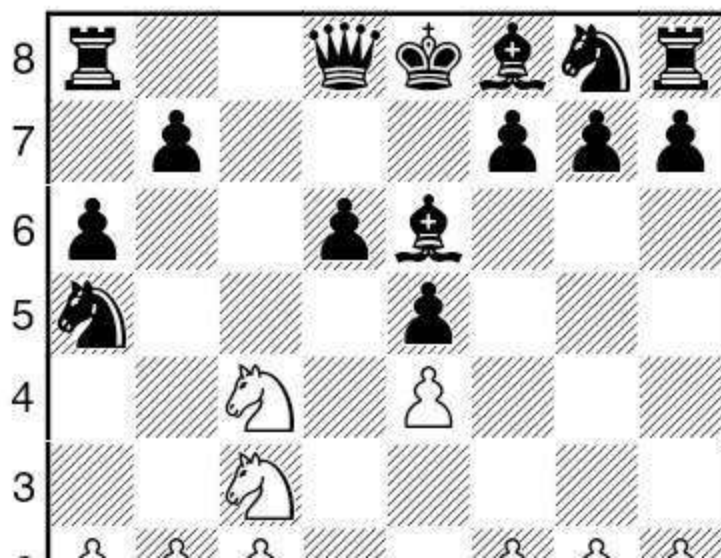
18.♘c7†! ♚xc7

18...♙f8 19.♘e6† ♙xe6 20.fxe6 ♘xh1† 21.♙d2±

19.♚xh4 ♘xh1 20.♖c3! 0-0 21.♙xc6±

White emerges with a big advantage, as the h1-knight will fall as well.

A3) 8...♘a5





This virtually unknown move was tried by Harikrishna against Giri in 2014. Black avoids the knight jump to b6, but we soon get a Najdorf-like position, which is particularly reminiscent of the 6.♕e3 e5 7.♘f3 variation. It appears that Hari underestimated White's chances in a typical structure, as you will see.

**9.♘d5 ♗xc4 10.♕xc4 ♖c8 11.♔d3!**

Anish realizes that Black will probably have to go for ...♘f6 at some point, and thus prepares for that already.

**11...♕e7**

11...♘f6 12.♕g5 ♕e7 13.♕xf6 ♕xf6 14.0-0-0± shows one of the uses of the queen on d3. The game should be one-sided since I don't expect Black to have many prospects on the queenside.

**12.0-0 ♘f6 13.♘xf6† ♕xf6 14.♕xe6! fxe6**

This exchange might appear to have improved Black's structure, but there is more to the position than the d5-square. Taking into account the material remaining on the board, it will be really hard for Black to get counterplay with this structure.

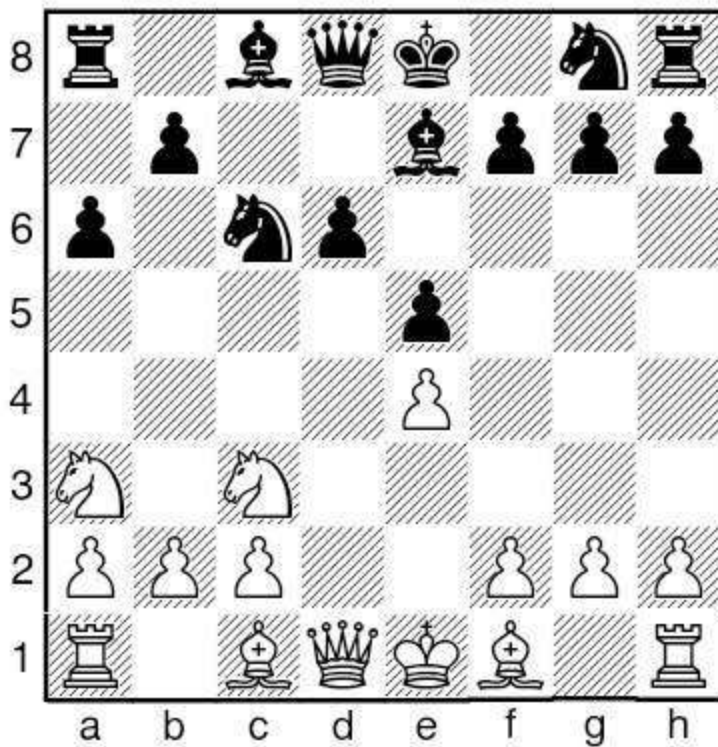
**15.c4 0-0 16.a4 ♔c7 17.b3±**

White can build up pressure against the d6-pawn and continue manoeuvring on both sides of the board. The queen can always jump to the kingside via e2, and the rooks can lift along the 3rd rank. There are also various ideas on the queenside like a4-a5, ♕e3 and so on. Hari did not like the idea of passive defence so he tried to free himself with a pawn sacrifice, but it wasn't quite enough:

**17...d5 18.cxd5 ♖fd8 19.♖b1 exd5 20.exd5 ♔c2 21.♖d1**

White went on to convert his extra pawn in Giri – Harikrishna, Linares 2014.

## B) 7...♗e7



This is the trendiest move at present. Black's idea is to meet 8.♘c4 with 8...b5 9.♘e3 ♘f6 when, compared with variation A2 above, the bishop is much safer on c8 than on e6, and he will be able to consider moves like ...♘xd5 if it suits him. That is why I have chosen a different plan.

### 8.♗e3 ♘f6

8...♗e6 9.♘c4 was considered under 8...♗e7 9.♗e3 in the notes to variation A.

8...b5 does not achieve much after 9.♘d5 ♖b8 10.c4 b4 11.♘c2 ♘f6, when either 12.f3 or 12.♙d3 leaves White in control.

### 9.♘c4

Now **B1)** 9...♗e6 must be considered, but **B2)** 9...b5 is the main line.

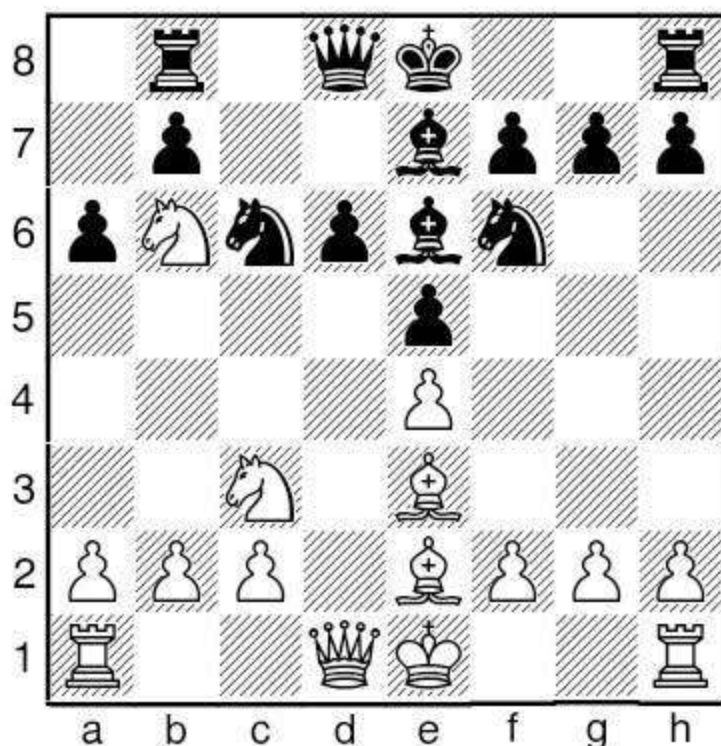
9...0-0 allows White to build a nice bind: 10.♗b6 ♔d7 11.♗e2 ♖b8 12.a4 ♗d8 13.♗e3± with ideas of a4-a5 and ♘d5,  
Markgraf – Horvath, Germany 2014.



## B1) 9...♙e6 10.♘b6

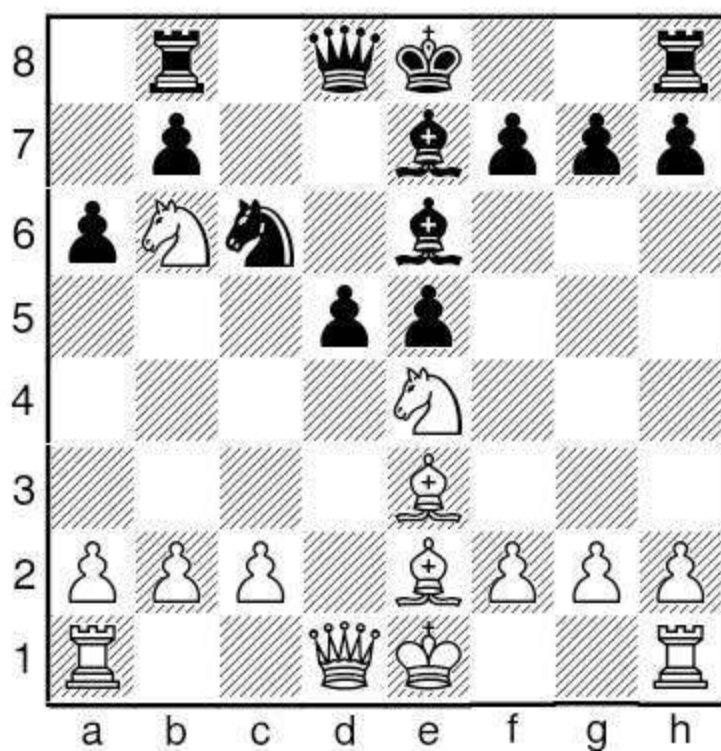
10.♘d5 may also be promising, but the text move is my preference.

## 10...♖b8 11.♙e2



Black can try the forcing **B11) 11...♘xe4** or the calmer **B12) 11...0-0**.

## B11) 11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 d5



### 13. ♖g4!

In the similar position in variation B12, where both sides have castled, White moves his knight to c5. Here 13. ♖c5?! would be a mistake, as 13... d4 14. ♖xe6 fxe6 15. ♖xd4 exd4! 16. ♖c4 ♖b4† turns the tables.

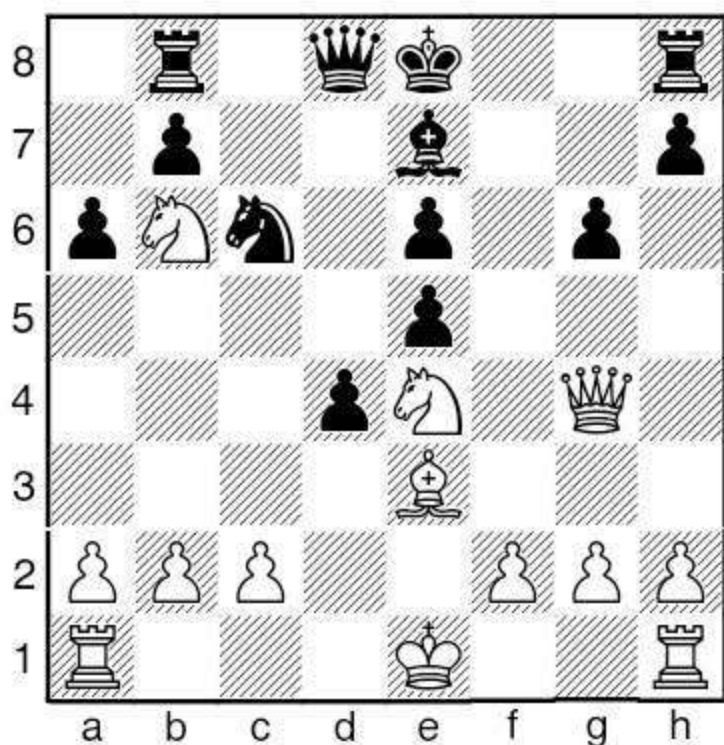
White may have other moves to consider but, since I found this one over the board one sleepy morning at the Bundesliga, I'm definitely partial to it. Black will have to accept an ugly structure with tripled pawns, so it hardly matters if one of them is 'extra'.

### 13... dxe4

13... d4 14. ♖xe6 fxe6 15. ♔h5†!

15. ♖h6!? is the move I had calculated during the game, but it leads to a lot of complications after 15... ♔xb6 16. ♖xg7 ♖g8 17. ♔h5† ♔d7.

15... g6 16. ♔g4



### 16... dxe3

16... ♔xb6 17. ♔xe6 ♔d8 (17... dxe3 18. ♖f6†+–) 18. 0-0-0±  
17. ♔xe6 ♖d4 18. ♖f6† ♔f8 19. ♖fd7† ♔g7 20. ♔xe5† ♖f6  
21. ♔xf6† ♔xf6 22. ♖xf6 ♖xc2† 23. ♔e2 ♖xa1 24. ♖xa1±

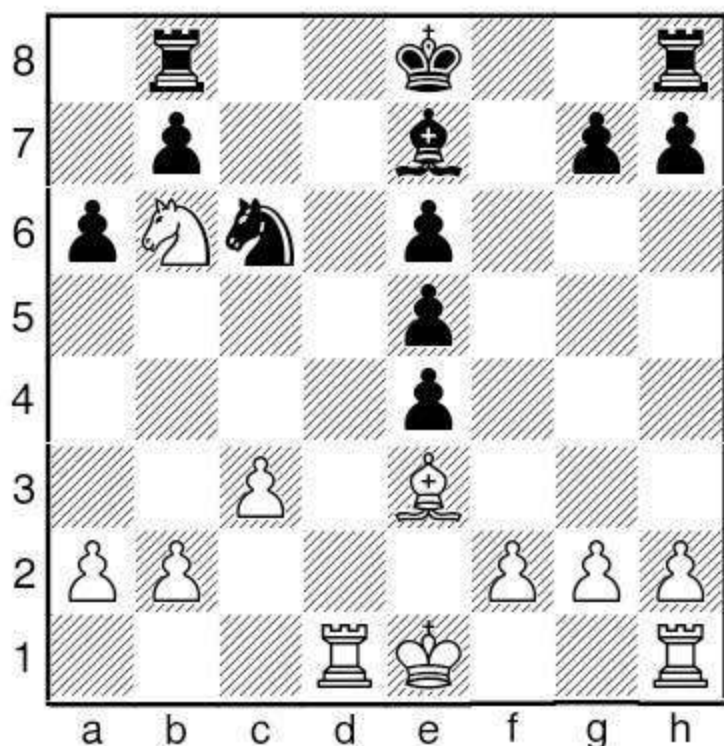


White will walk away with either two knights for a rook or a healthy extra pawn.

**14. ♖xe6 ♔xd1†**

14...fxe6 15.c3 ♔d3 does not drastically alter the nature of the position. 16.♖h5† g6 17.♖e2 ♖d8 18.♖d1±

**15. ♖xd1 fxe6 16.c3±**



Black obviously has some defensive chances, but for practical purposes his position is incredibly unpleasant. His extra pawn in the centre only serves to block any possible activation of his pieces, while White can easily improve his position on the queenside. I went on to win in Negi – Kempinski, Germany 2014.

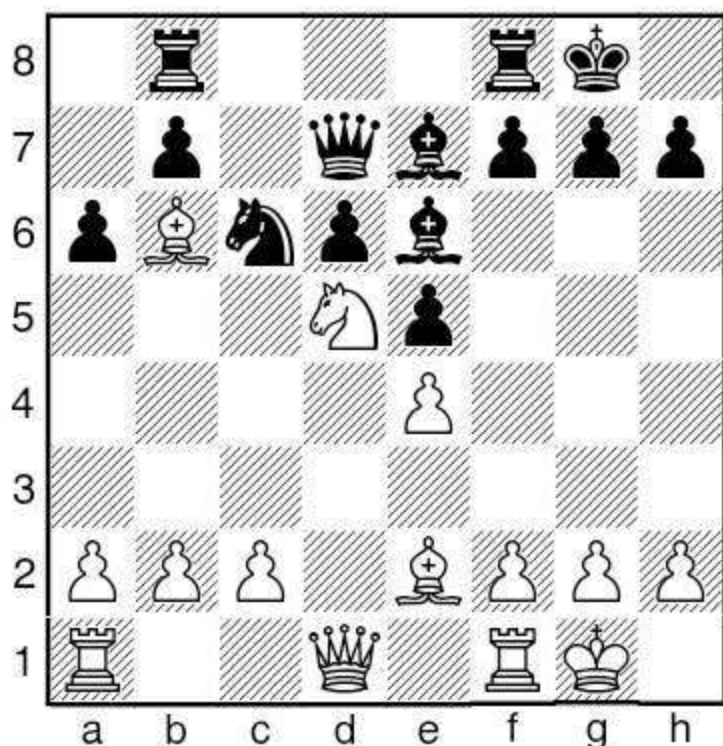
**B12) 11...0-0 12.0-0**



## 12...♞xe4

This is the only serious attempt to justify Black's set-up.

12...♞d7 13.♞cd5 leaves Black in a bind: 13...♞xb6 14.♙xb6 (14.♞xb6 ♙g5 15.♙xg5 ♚xg5 16.c3 ♞e7 17.♙c4N is not bad either) 14...♚d7 Korneev – Obodchuk, Porto Carras 2005.

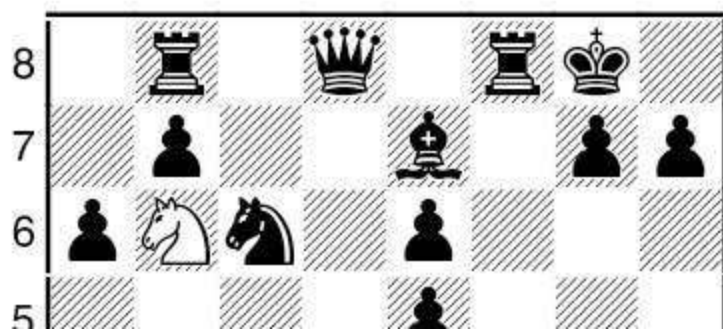


15.c4!N The knight on d5 will be untouchable, so challenging it with ...♞e7 will not help Black much. 15...♙d8 16.♙e3 ♞e7 17.a4± White keeps a solid grip, and ideas such as ...f5 are likely to lead to weaknesses rather than active play.

## 13.♞xe4 d5 14.♞c5 d4

Black regains his piece easily enough, but we can saddle him with some positional weaknesses.

## 15.♞xe6 fxe6





## 16. ♖xd4! ? N

This seems like the simplest route to an edge.

## 16... exd4

16... ♖xd4 17. ♖c4 e4 18. c3 ♖f5 19. ♔xd8 ♜fxd8 20. g4±

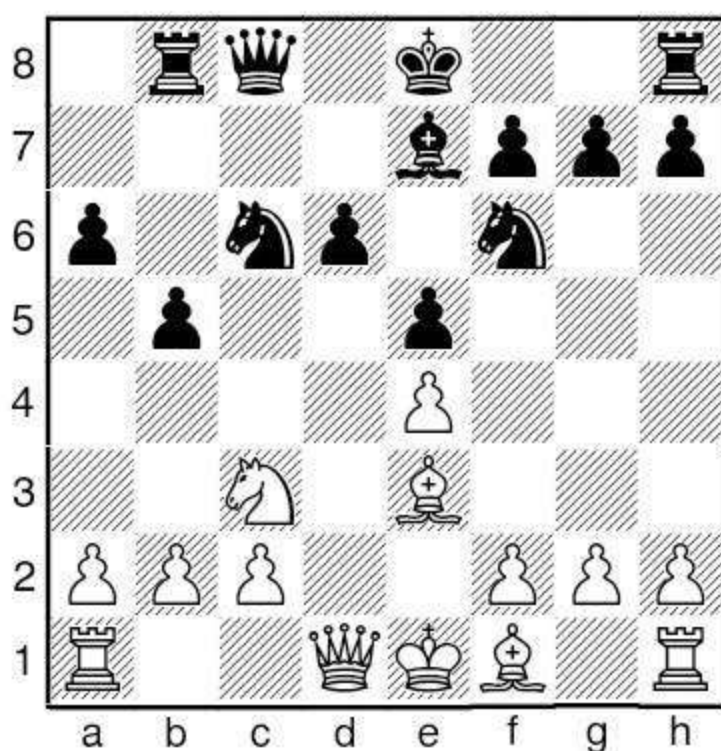
## 17. ♖c4 ♔d5 18. ♖d3

White's bishop is clearly better than its counterpart and Black's central pawns can easily be blockaded. If Black eliminates our strong bishop his remaining minor piece will be rather weak:

## 18... ♖b4 19. a3 b5 20. ♖d2 ♖xd3 21. cxd3±

## B2) 9... b5 10. ♖b6 ♜b8 11. ♖xc8 ♔xc8

11... ♜xc8? is completely the wrong idea, and 12. a4! b4 13. ♖d5 is a rotten position for Black.



Despite not having occurred in as many games as the other lines, this has become one of the most topical variations of the Kalashnikov and has been debated in several GM games. It is also the recommendation of Tony Rotella in his recent book on the Kalashnikov.

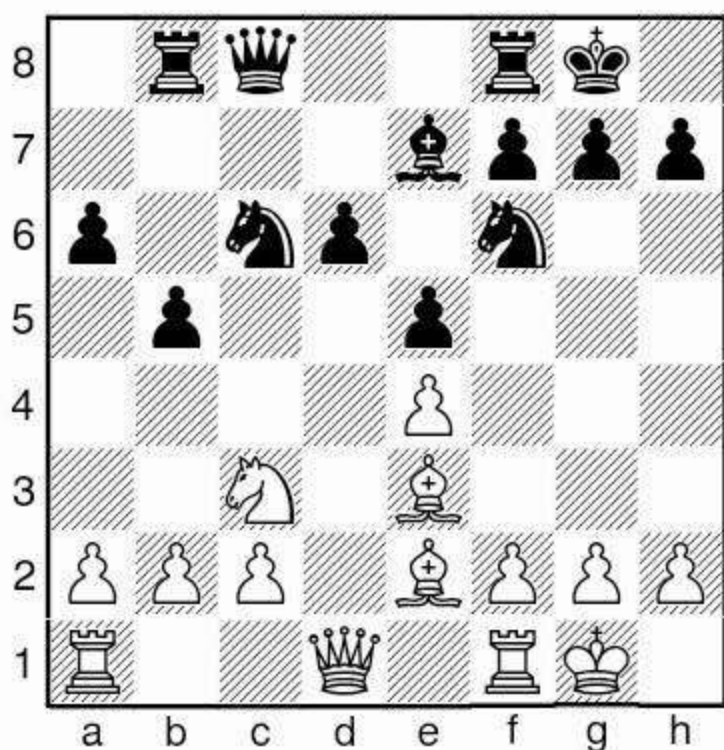
## 12.♙e2!

Ideally White would like to avoid playing 12.♙d3, as it allows Black to eliminate the bishop with ...♘b4 in some lines. A timely ...b4 advance might also be annoying because ♘d5 will not be that strong anymore.

12.a4!? is a critical move which has done well for White, but Rotella's 12...0-0N is an interesting try. This could certainly be explored further, but I like White's chances in the main line.

## 12...0-0 13.0-0!?

13.a3 has done well in a few games but it is too slow. Instead we will offer the e4-pawn, just as we have done in some of the earlier lines in this chapter.



## 13...b4

13...♘a5 has not been tried, and indeed 14.♙g5! looks excellent for White.

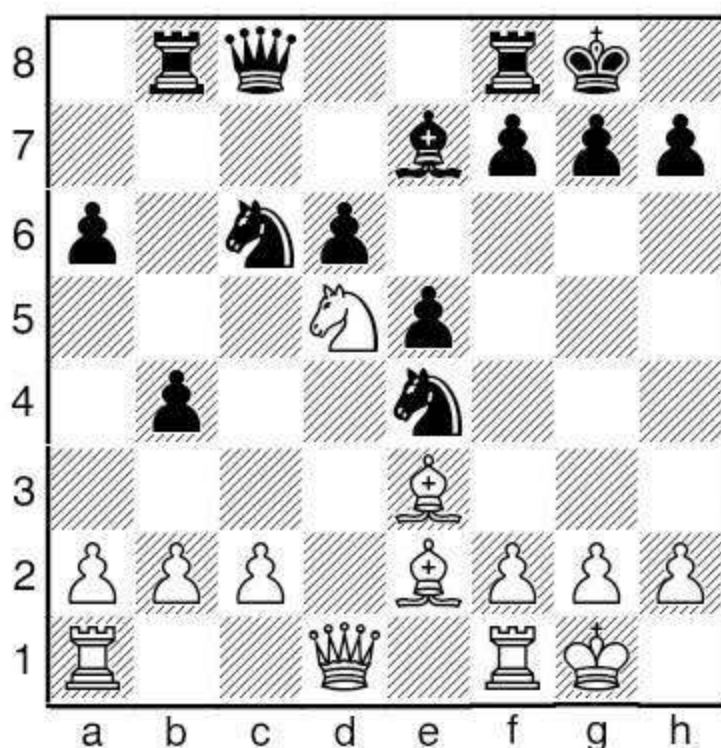
13...♖d8 allows us to switch plans with 14.a3!, having almost saved a tempo compared with 13.a3. A possible continuation is: 14...d5 (14...h6 15.♙d3 ♘a5 16.b3 ♘b7 17.b4 ♖d7 18.♘d5± A. Vovk – Libiszewski, Amantea 2014; 14...b4!?



N 15.♖d5 ♜xd5 16.exd5 ♜d4 17.♙xd4 exd4 18.axb4 ♖xb4 19.b3±) 15.♖xd5 ♜xe4 16.c4! N± followed by ♖c1 and Black is under pressure.

## 14.♖d5 ♜xe4

So far Black has achieved a plus score from this critical position. However, I was able to find a promising new idea.



## 15.a4!N

Neither 15.♙d3 ♜f6 nor 15.♙c4 ♜f6 16.b3 ♜xd5 17.♙xd5 ♜h8 seem terribly convincing for White.

15.a3 has been the most popular choice, but Black has achieved good results by ignoring it with 15...♙d8. Since ...bxa3 isn't a worry, I realized that a4-a5 might prove more effective, as it fixes the weak a6-pawn and secures the excellent b6-outpost for our pieces. Of course Black can prevent this with ...a5, but that gives us the nice b5-square for the bishop.

## 15...♜f6

Challenging the d5-knight is logical, but of course I considered several other tries:

15...♙d8 16.♙d3 ♜c5 17.♙xc5 dxc5 18.♙xa6 ♜d4 (18...♙xa6

19.♙xa6±) 19.♚c4± White controls the light squares and his a-pawn is strong. 19...♚f5?! gets nowhere after 20.♘e3±.

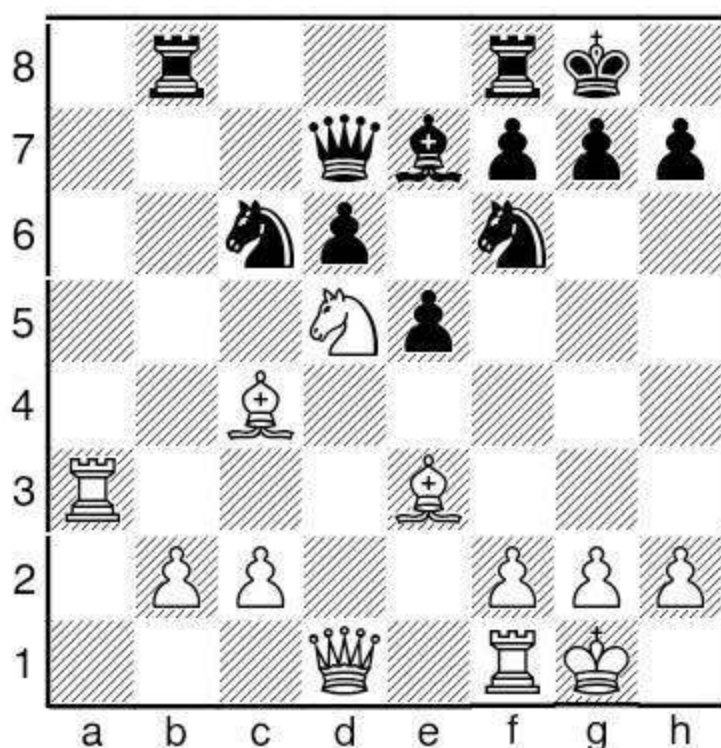
15...bxa3

This has occasionally been tested after 15.a3. As mentioned earlier, most Black players prefer to leave the pawn on b4, so the text move can be regarded as a concession – but we will check it anyway of course.

16.♖xa3 ♘f6

16...♖xb2 17.♚a1 ♖b8 18.♙f3 f5 19.♙xe4 fxe4 20.♖c3±

17.♙xa6 ♚d7 18.♙c4



18...♘xd5

18...♖xb2 can be met by 19.♘xe7† followed by ♙b3.

19.♙xd5 ♖xb2 20.♚f3! ♘d4 21.♙xd4 exd4 22.♙b3

The rook on b2 is in no immediate danger, but it is also unable to escape, and White eventually won in Povarenkov – Frijling, corr. 2013.

15...a5!?

This is an important option as it prevent a4-a5, but White has other ways to cause problems on the queenside.

16.♖c1! ♙g5



16...♔h8 17.♙b5 ♘d8 18.c3±

16...♘f6 17.♘xe7† ♘xe7 18.♙xd6±

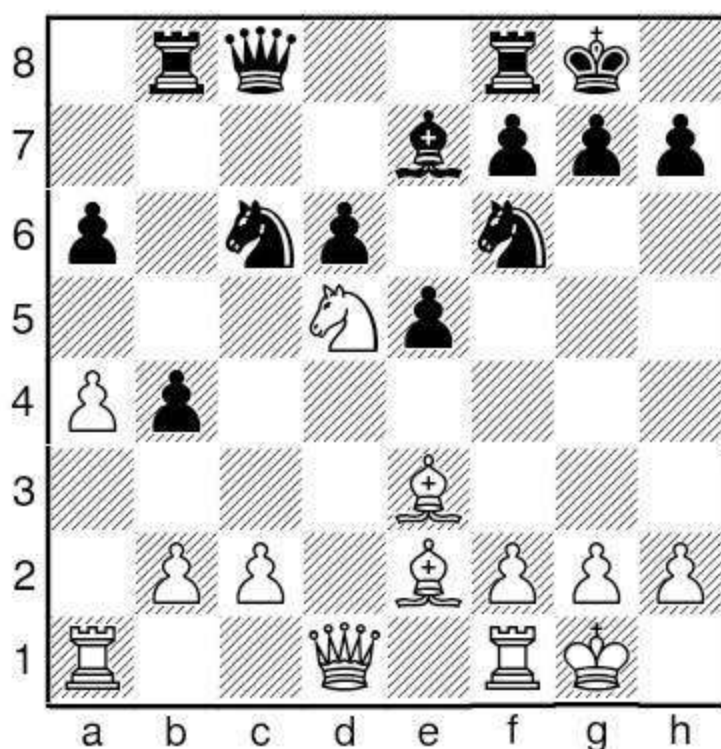
16...♙d8 17.c3 b3 18.♙b5±

17.♙xg5 ♘xg5 18.♙b5 ♔h8 19.c3 b3

This is pretty much forced.

20.♙xb3

White regains the pawn while keeping some initiative.



**16.a5!**

Proceeding with the plan.

**16...♙e8**

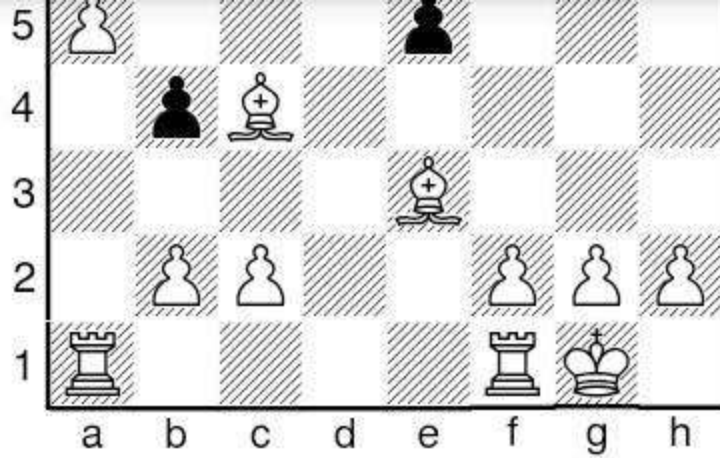
16...♘xd5 17.♙xd5 ♔h8 18.♙b6 ♘d8 gives White a pleasant choice between 19.♙fd1 ♘e6 20.g3, keeping some initiative, and 19.♙xd8!?, when each of the three possible recaptures allows us to take an important pawn.

**17.♘b6 ♙b7 18.♙c4 ♙d8**

18...♙bd8 19.♙d3±

**19.♙xd6 ♙c7**





## 20. ♔d3!

20. ♔c5 ♘xa5! 21. ♖xa5 ♙xb6 22. ♔xb6 ♔xb6 23. ♙xb6 ♖xb6 24. ♖fa1 ♖c6 25. b3 g6 26. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 27. ♖xa6 ♘e4 could be holdable for Black.

## 20...e4 21. ♔e2 ♙e5 22. ♙xa6 ♔c7 23. h3±

Black can get his pawn back by taking on b2, but the bishop pair and passed a-pawn ensure White's advantage.

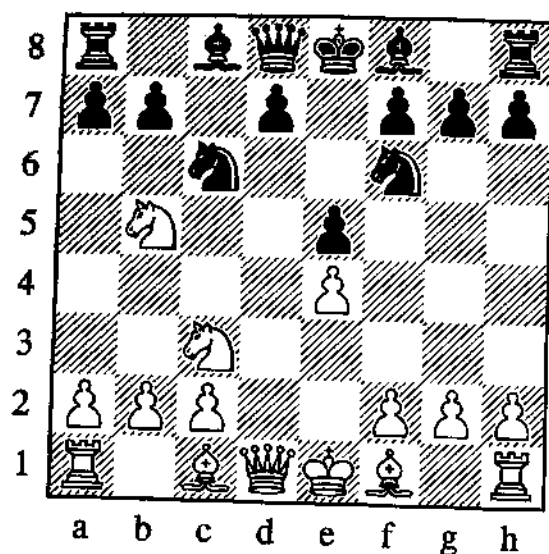
## Conclusion

For a long time these two bishop developments were relegated to sideline status, but recently they have picked up more of a following as new resources came to light. Starting with 7... ♙e6 8. ♘c4, we covered a few possibilities. 8...b5 9. ♘e3 ♘f6 is an especially challenging line, but the pawn sacrifice 10.g3! in conjunction with the novelty 13.a3!N poses Black major problems. By contrast, 8... ♘a5 leads to much quieter play; the fact that Harikrishna could play such an unknown move against Giri indicates that the whole variation is ripe for exploration.

Moving on, 7... ♙e7 is an even more fashionable choice at present. I propose 8. ♙e3 ♘f6 9. ♘c4, when the critical line continues 9...b5 10. ♘b6 ♖b8 11. ♘xc8 ♔xc8 12. ♙e2! 0-0 13. 0-0!?, when we yet again offer the e4-pawn. If Black accepts the sacrifice then my new idea of 15.a4!N poses tricky and unfamiliar problems to the defence.



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6  
5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5



This is our basic position against the Sveshnikov. We will briefly check A) 6...h6 before studying the normal B) 6...d6.

6...a6 just gives Black a worse version of variation A from Chapter 20: 7.♘d6† ♕xd6 8.♖xd6 ♖e7 9.♖xe7† ♘xe7 (9...♗xe7 10.♕g5±) 10.♕g5 b5 11.f3 ♕b7 12.0-0-0 h6 13.♕h4 g5 14.♕f2± Jakovenko – Cuartas, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

#### A) 6...h6 7.♘d6†

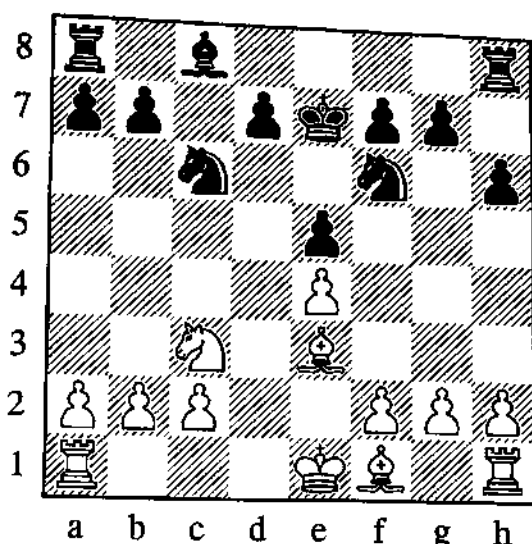
7.♕e3 d6!? 8.♘d5 ♘xd5 9.exd5 ♘b8 may give White an edge, but the text move is simpler.

7...♕xd6 8.♖xd6 ♖e7 9.♖xe7†

9.♘b5 is not really required, and after 9...♖b8! it's not clear how White even benefits.

9...♗xe7 10.♕e3

This position just seems pleasant for White. At first Black appears to be solid but, without the dark-squared bishop, it is likely to be a one-sided game, and White has many plans to choose from.



10...d6 11.f3 ♕e6 12.0-0-0

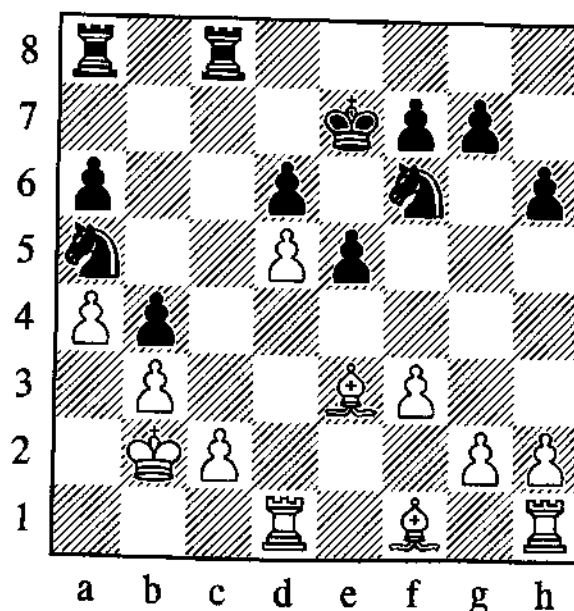
Having the bishop pair makes White's position considerably easier to play. Black has limited ways to find counterplay; even if he manages to play ...d5 somehow, he risks opening the game for White's bishops.

12...a6 13.b3!?

White has a choice of promising plans. The text move sees him edge forwards on the queenside and improve his king's position.

Here is an example where he made good progress on the kingside: 13.g4 b5 14.h4 ♖hc8 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘d7 17.♘d5† ♕xd5 18.exd5 ♘b4 19.♖h2± Zelesco – Smirnov, Melbourne 2013.

13...♖hc8 14.♗b2 b5 15.a4 b4 16.♘d5† ♕xd5 17.exd5 ♘a5



18. ♖f2 ♘b7 19. ♕e1 ♖c5 20. ♖xb4 ♖xd5  
21. ♕c4

White can also keep the rooks on with 21. ♖e1!N, but there is nothing wrong with simplifying.

21... ♖xd1 22. ♖xd1 a5 23. ♕e1±

White had a clearly favourable endgame in Burg – Reinderman, Amsterdam 2013.

### B) 6...d6

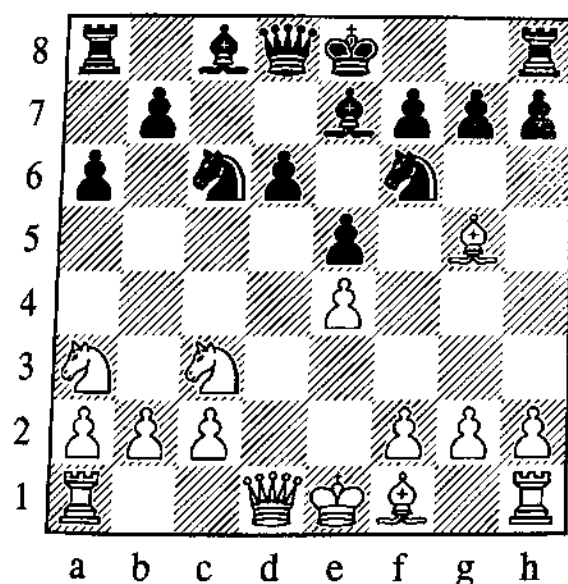
This is the usual move of course.

7. ♕g5 a6 8. ♘a3

In the rest of this chapter we will deal with B1) 8... ♕e7 and B2) 8... ♕e6. Neither move has the best theoretical reputation, but it is worth knowing a bit about both of them.

8...b5 is the main line, and will be dealt with in the final four chapters.

### B1) 8... ♕e7



White almost always meets this with some combination of ♕xf6 and ♘c4, but we should think carefully about the order in which to play these moves. Transpositions are possible, but each option gives Black certain independent possibilities.

9. ♘c4

After evaluating both options I prefer this one; it is more flexible, and I am not worried by the extra possibility it allows.

Let me briefly show why I was less satisfied by the alternative:

9. ♕xf6 ♕xf6

9...gxf6!? 10. ♘c4 f5 is the first extra option; it looks like Black has a somewhat suspicious version of the main Sveshnikov, but it would still take some effort to prove an advantage.

10. ♘c4 ♕e7!?

This is the extra option that bothers me the most.

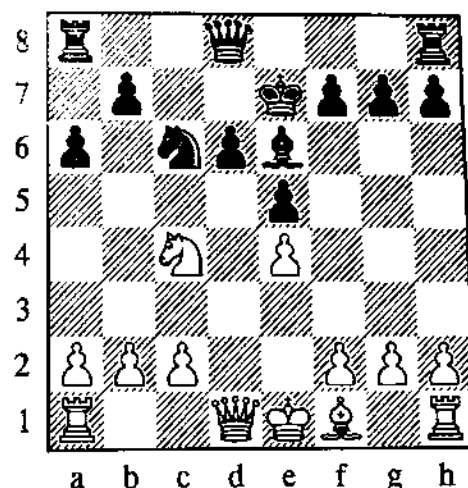
10... ♘d4 and 10... 0-0 transpose to variations B13 and B14 respectively.

11. ♘d5 ♕e6 12. ♘xe7

12. ♘cb6 ♖b8 13. c3 amusingly transposes to 8... ♕e6 9. ♘c4 ♖c8 10. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 11. ♘b6 ♖b8 12. ♘cd5 ♖d8 13. c3 ♕e7, as covered later in variation B22 – except that here it is Black to move instead of White! Maybe we can still claim an edge, but being a tempo down is not ideal.

12... ♖xe7!

Following 12... ♖xe7 13. ♖xd6, Black's compensation is uncertain.



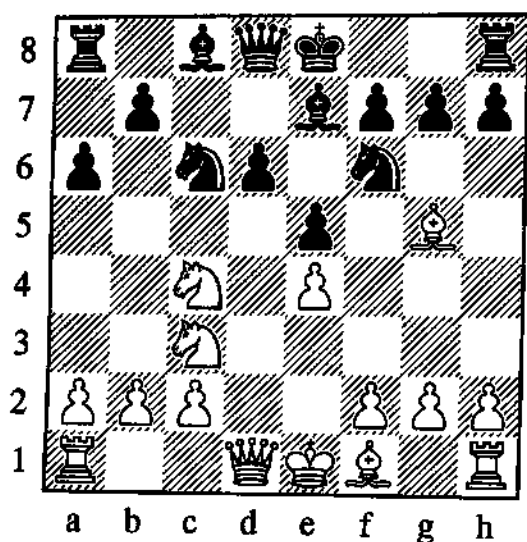
13. ♖d2 d5!N

An obvious improvement.

14. 0-0-0 d4 15. f4 f6 16. fxe5 b5!±



We enter some hellish complications; there is no need to go for anything like this against such a sideline.



Black may proceed with B11) 9...♙e6?!, B12) 9...♙g4!?, B13) 9...♘d4 and B14) 9...0-0.

B11) 9...♙e6?! 10.♙xf6 ♙xf6

10...gxf6? 11.♘e3 is positional suicide for Black.

This strange pawn sacrifice has been played in a bunch of old-ish correspondence games. The only explanation I can think of is that the computers of ten to fifteen years ago were not strong enough to evaluate the ensuing positions accurately.

11.♘d6† ♙f8 12.♘c4 ♙d4

12...♙g5 13.♘d5 b5 14.♘ce3 g6 15.♙d3 leaves White a solid pawn up.

13.♘e3

White has an extra pawn and will soon plonk a knight on the excellent d5-square.

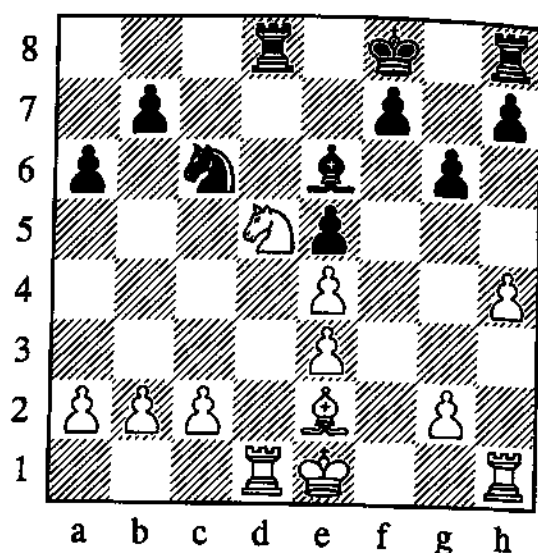
13...♙xd1†

13...♙h4 14.♘cd5 maintains control.

13...♙d8 14.♙d3 ♘b4 15.0-0 ♘xd3 16.cxd3 ♙g5 (16...♙xd3 17.♙f3±) 17.♙f3 h5 18.♘cd5

♙h6 19.♘f5 ♙xf5 20.♙xf5± Enkalo – Kazurov, email 2012.

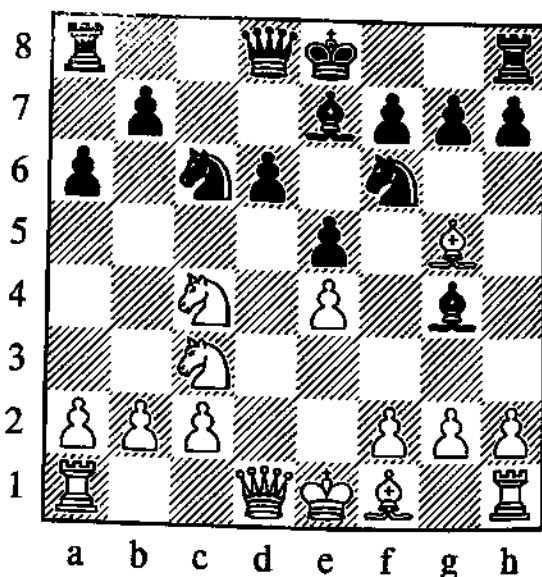
14.♙xd1 ♙g5 15.♘cd5 ♙d8 16.♙e2 g6 17.h4 ♙xe3 18.fxe3



18...h5 19.0-0 ♙g7 20.c4

Even though Black managed to hold this position in Canamas Soler – Llompart Flexas, corr 2011, it's obvious that he is just a pawn ahead without any real compensation.

B12) 9...♙g4!?



This option is only available when White delays ♙xf6, but it does not worry me in the slightest.

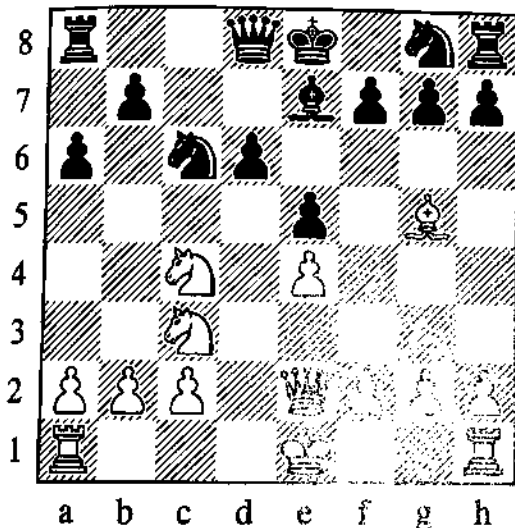
10.  $\text{Re2}$

After 10.f3?! the pawn sacrifice 10...  $\text{Re6}$  makes more sense, as the pawn move weakens the light squares while rendering the e3-knight less stable. 11.  $\text{Rxf6}$   $\text{Rxf6}$  12.  $\text{Qxd6+}$   $\text{Qf8}$  13.  $\text{Qc4}$   $\text{Qd4}$  14.  $\text{Qe3N}$   $\text{Rh4+!}$ ? 15. g3  $\text{Rg5}$  16.  $\text{Qed5}$   $\text{Rc8}$

10...  $\text{Re2}$  11.  $\text{Rxe2}$   $\text{Qg8!}$ ?

11...  $\text{Qd4}$  is no problem after 12.  $\text{Rd3}$  0-0 13.  $\text{Rxf6}$   $\text{Rxf6}$  14.  $\text{Qd5}$ ± when Black's active knight will soon be expelled.

The text move is a clever, but still rather desperate-looking, attempt by Black to avoid a permanently worse situation with a bad bishop being dominated by a knight on d5.



12.  $\text{Qd2!}$

Keeping the  $\text{Qe3}$  option alive.

12.  $\text{Re3}$  b5 13.  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Qf6}$  14. 0-0 0-0 15.  $\text{Rfd1}$   $\text{Rc7}$  gave Black a healthy Sicilian position in Castor – Stangl, corr. 2011.

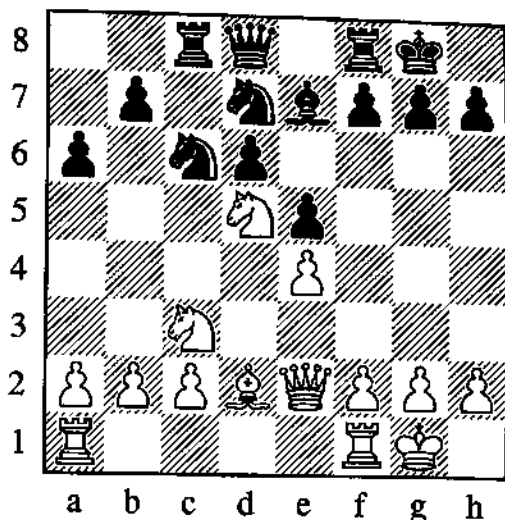
12...  $\text{Qf6}$

12... b5 13.  $\text{Qe3}$ ±

13. 0-0 0-0 14.  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Rc8}$  15.  $\text{Qed5}$   $\text{Qd7!?$  N

This seemed like an interesting move to check, but it does not help Black a great deal.

15...  $\text{Qd4}$  16.  $\text{Rd3}$   $\text{Qe6}$  (16...  $\text{Qxd5}$  17.  $\text{Qxd5}$ ±) 17.  $\text{Rd1}$  gave White a solid positional edge in Kasabasic – Launhardt, Internet 2012.



16.  $\text{Rg4!}$ ?

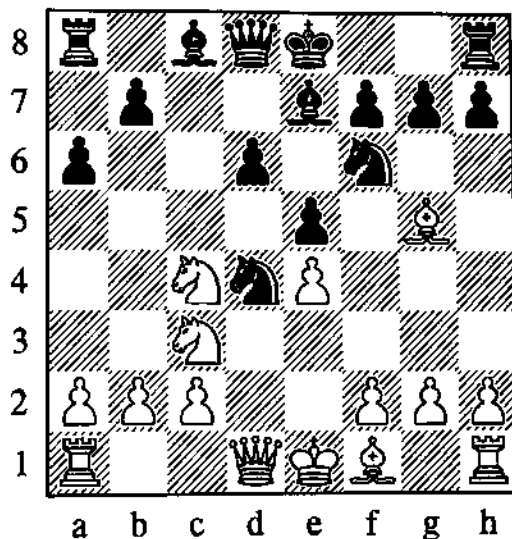
An unusual but effective way to prevent ...  $\text{Rg5}$ .

16...  $\text{Qh8}$

16...  $\text{Qd4}$  17.  $\text{Re3!}$   $\text{Qxc2?}$  18.  $\text{Qxe7+}$   $\text{Rxe7}$  19.  $\text{Qd5}$   $\text{Rd8}$  20.  $\text{Rh6}$  g6 21.  $\text{Rxd7!}$  wins.

17.  $\text{Re3}$  b5 18.  $\text{Rfd1}$ ±

B13) 9...  $\text{Qd4}$



This has been quite popular, but it just seems to lead to a bad position for Black.

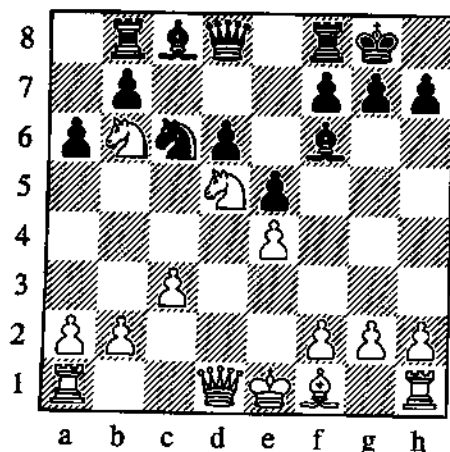


**10. ♖xf6 ♖xf6**

10...gxf6 11. ♖d5±

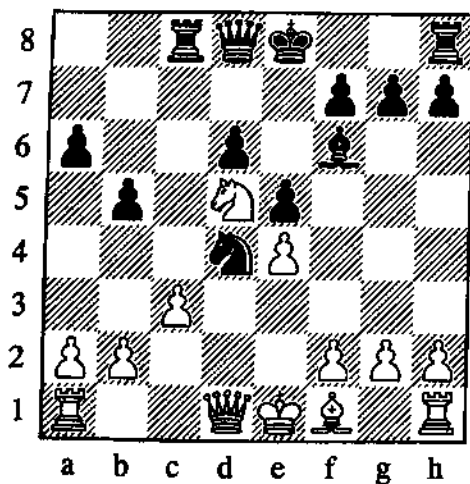
**11. ♖d5 ♖e6**

11...0-0 12.c3 ♖c6 13. ♖cb6!? (White can also win a pawn with 13. ♖db6 ♖b8 14. ♖xd6 as in Areshchenko – Bogdanovich, Lvov 2014. However, I just want to show that a purely positional approach can be unpleasant for Black as well.) 13...♖b8



14. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 15.g3± Morais – Dantas, email 2010. It is hard for Black to arrange ...♖e7 to get rid of the d5-knight – and even if he does so, the position with opposite-coloured bishops will be no fun at all for him.

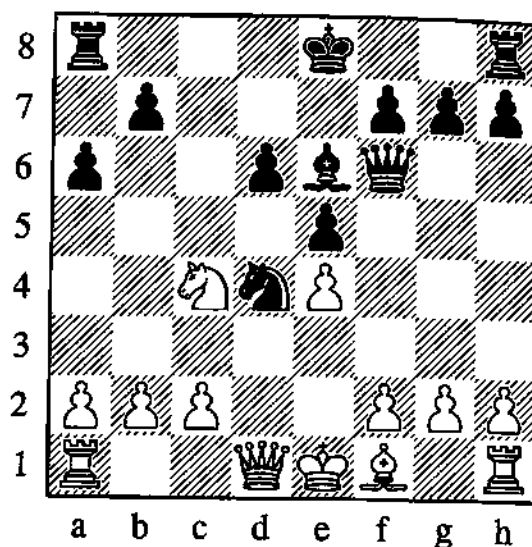
11...b5 12. ♖cb6 ♖b8 13. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 14.c3 gives White an even nicer position due to Black's weak queenside pawns, as Averbakh demonstrated long ago:



14...♖e6 15.a4 0-0 16.axb5 axb5 17. ♖xb5 ♖b8 18.c4 ♖d4 19.0-0± Averbakh – Korchnoi, Tula 1950.

**12. ♖xf6 ♖xf6**

12...gxf6 13.c3 ♖xc4 14. ♖xc4 is horrible for Black.

**13. ♖xd6!?**

13.c3 ♖xc4 14. ♖xc4 ♖c6 15.0-0± is an easy route to a positional advantage, so take your pick.

**13...♖e7**

13...♖f8 14.c3 ♖g4 15. ♖xg4 ♖c2† 16.♖d2 ♖xa1 17. ♖f5±

**14.c3!**

14. ♖c4 ♖hd8! is not so easy.

**14...♖xd6!?**

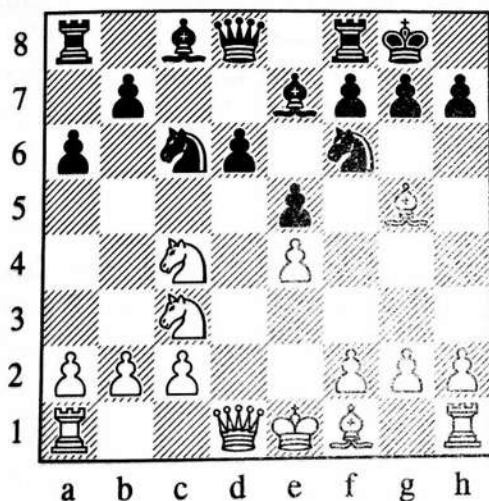
After 14...♖f3†N 15. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 16.gxf3± White remains a healthy pawn up.

**15.cxd4 exd4**

This position arose in Arias Rodriguez – Ruiz Ruiz, Asturias 1993. Somehow Black gets away with his rather exotic king placement because White has yet to mobilize his pieces. Nevertheless, White is certainly better after:

**16.♔d3N±**

It will take Black a few moves to get his king to safety, during which White will castle and develop an initiative, possibly with f2-f4.

**B14) 9...0-0**

This seems like the most logical way to sacrifice the d6-pawn.

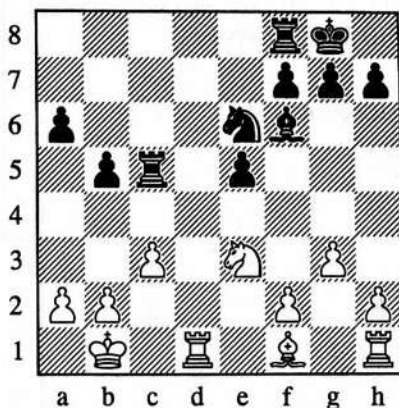
**10.♙xf6 ♙xf6 11.♖xd6 ♙e6**

White needs to know what he's doing here, as Black is getting active rather quickly.

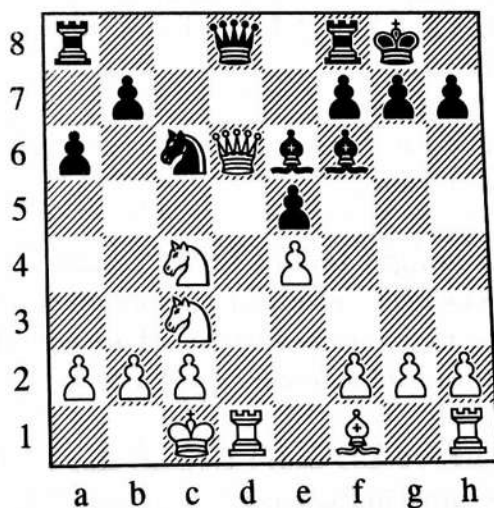
**12.0-0-0!?**

12.♕d5 leads to some forcing lines culminating in an endgame: 12...♙xd5 (After 12...♙g5 13.♖xd8 ♖axd8 14.♕cb6 ♖d6 Black

managed to hold easily in Balogh – Radjabov, Bastia 2010, but that doesn't mean much. I think this was just a one-off experiment in a rapid game by Radjabov, as Black is just a pawn down without much compensation.) 13.exd5 ♕d4 14.♖xd8 ♖axd8 15.0-0-0 ♖xd5 16.c3 b5 17.♕e3 ♖c5 18.♗b1 ♕e6 19.g3



The computer insists White is just better here, and practical results have so far been decent, with a mix of wins and draws. There are probably some lines in which we would settle for this type of advantage but, since Black has made a questionable pawn sacrifice, I want to find something more convincing.

**12...♖xd6**

12...♙e7 13.♖xd8 ♖fxd8 (13...♖axd8 14.♙e2 is similar) 14.♙e2 b5 15.♕e3 ♙g5 16.♗b1 ♕d4 17.♙d3 left Black without any



real compensation in Nierobisz – Cardenas Huaman, email 2008.

12...♙g5† 13.♖b1 ♗f6

At first this looks like a cool idea, but White just has to realize that ...♗d8 can be met by ♘d5.

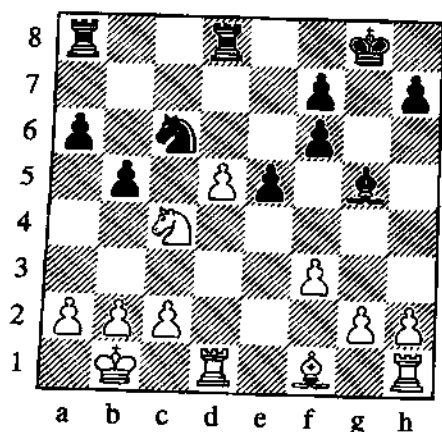
14.f3 ♗fd8 15.♘d5! ♗xd5N

15...♗h6 16.♗c7!N±

16.♗xf6 gxf6

16...♗xf6 17.exd5±

17.exd5 b5



18.♘a3

White could even consider the fancy 18.f4!, intending 18...exf4 19.♗e2 or 18...♗f6 19.g3 ♗g5 20.♗g2, but such ideas are hardly necessary.

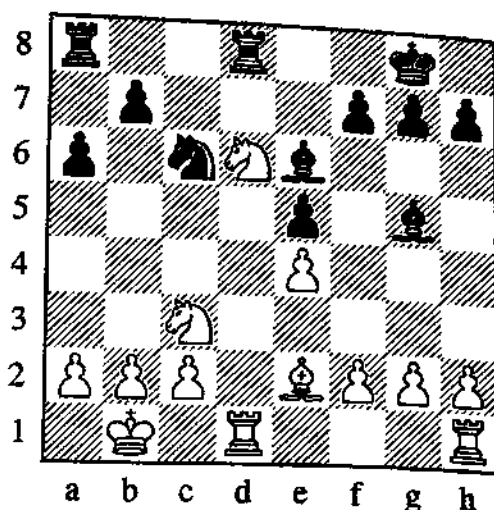
18...♘e7 19.c4±

White has the stronger bishop and better pawn structure.

13.♘xd6 ♗g5† 14.♖b1 ♗fd8 15.♗e2!?

This looks like a fairly straightforward move, but the tactical ideas after ...♘d4 are critical, and rather hard to foresee.

15.h4 ♗e7 16.♘f5 ♗xd1† 17.♘xd1 ♗c5 18.a3 ♗d8 occurred in Palmkoeck – Cijis, corr. 2007. In this case Black has better compensation than in some other lines because of the nice bishop on c5, although I'm still not sure if it's enough for full equality.



15...♗d4!N

As mentioned above, this is the critical move to consider.

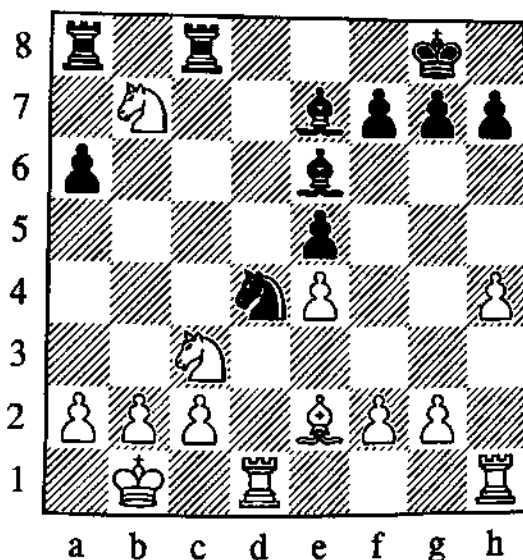
15...b5 is just better for White after 16.♘f5 or 16.♘b7!N.

15...♗e7 also gives White a risk-free advantage: 16.♘c4 ♗c5 17.♗xd8† ♗xd8 18.♗d1 ♗d4 (18...♗xf2 19.♘xe5!) 19.♘e3 ♗xc3 (19...♗xe3 20.fxe3±) 20.♗xd8† ♘xd8 21.bxc3 ♖f8 22.♗c4 ♖e7 23.♖b2 ♗d7 24.♗d5±

16.♘xb7 ♗dc8 17.h4!

17.♗d3 ♗ab8 18.♘d5 ♗xb7 19.♗xa6 ♖xb2† 20.♖xb2 ♗xc2† 21.♖b1 ♗xf2 is pretty messy but thankfully we can avoid such messy complications.

17...♗e7



**18. Bxd4?**

This was my idea.

**18...exd4 19. Qd5**

With two pawns for the exchange, we have a nice material balance as well as good squares for our pieces and a lack of activity for Black's rooks.

**19...Qf6**

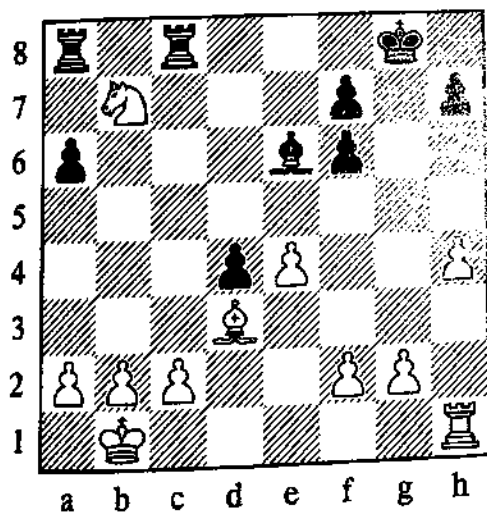
19...Qxd5 20.exd5 Bc7 21.Qa5 Bd8  
22.Qf3±

**20. Qxf6†**

After 20.Qb6?! Bcb8! 21.Qxa8 Bxb7 White has no advantage and even has to be careful not to fall into trouble with such a badly-placed knight.

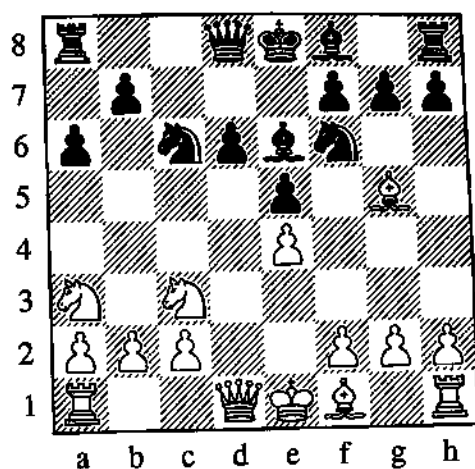
**20...gxf6 21. Qd3**

21.Qa5 f5 22.Qd3 fxe4 23.Qxe4 Ba7  
24.Qd3 could also be considered, but the text move is simpler.



21...a5 22.Qd6 Bd8 23.Qf5 Qxf5 24.exf5  
b5 25.b3±

It will take a lot of work to convert White's advantage, but it's a one-sided endgame and White has many possible ways to improve his position.

**B2) 8...Qe6**

Along with the previous variation, this hasn't been played much recently, and a lot of 'theory' has been stuck in the past. Generally White seems to get a pleasant position with sensible play, although some accuracy here and there does help.

**9. Qc4**

Now comes B21) 9...Bb8! or B22) 9...Bc8.

9...Qe7? transposes to the earlier variation B11.

9...Qd4 seems pointless; after 10.Qd5 Qxd5 11.exd5 Black's knight is placed strangely and he will spend many moves to bring it to a reasonable square. 11...Qe7 12.c3 Qb5 13.Qe3± Unterreitmeier – Schulz, Bavaria 1994.

**9...b5 10. Qxf6 Bxf6**

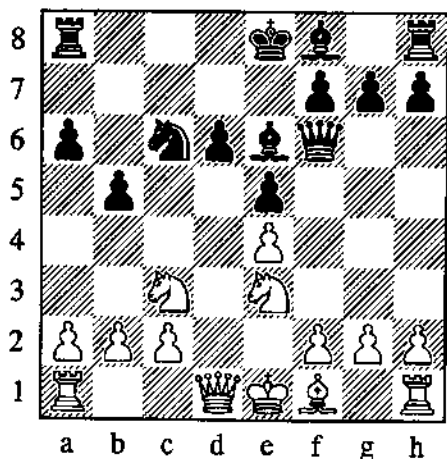
10...gxf6? 11.Qe3± Such positions are always bad for Black unless he can play ...f5.

**11. Qe3**

11.Qxd6† leads to some strange complications that we do well to avoid: 11...Qxd6 12.Bxd6 Qd4 13.Qd3 Bd8! 14.Bxa6 0-0 The white queen is stuck in the far corner, while 0-0 runs into ...Qf3† ideas



— a recipe for an opening disaster for White. The text move is much simpler: White maintains his positional bind and prepares to exploit Black's weakened queenside.

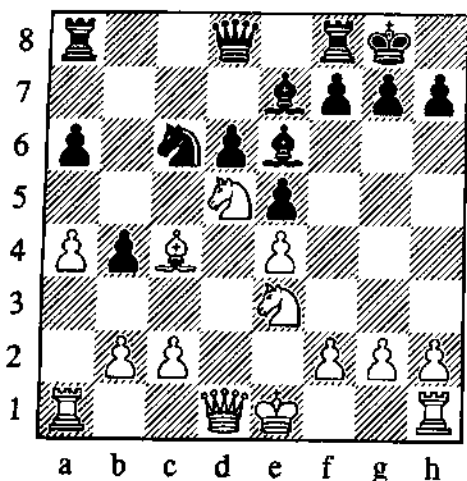


11...Wd8

11...g6N is a maximalist try, but Black does not have time for it: 12.a4 b4 13.Qcd5 Wd8 14.Qc4 Qh6 15.Wd3 White threatens to take on a6, and 15...a5 allows the unpleasant 16.Qb5. The only other option is 15...Qxe3 16.Qxe3 Qxc4 17.Wxc4 but Black is under pressure here too.

12.Qcd5 Qe7 13.a4 b4 14.Qc4 0-0

14...Qg5 15.Wd3! is similar to the line above; Black simply doesn't have time to put his bishop on a fancy square before castling.



15.h4!N

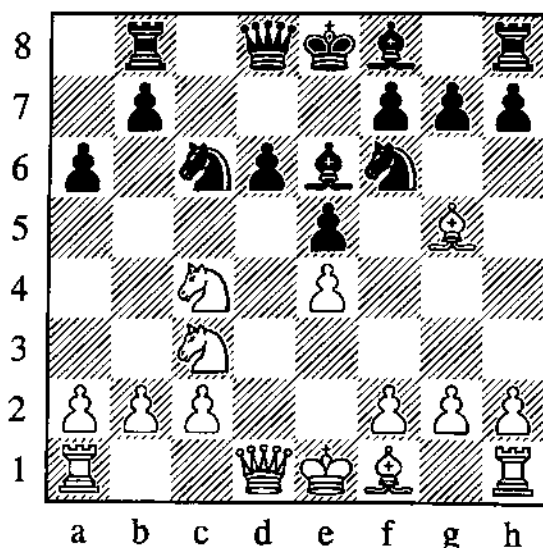
Almost all the games have continued 15.Wd3 a5, with White playing some combination of Qd1, 0-0 and Qf5. White may well be

able to claim an edge here too, but I don't like the idea of allowing the black bishop to get active.

15...a5 16.g3 Qc8 17.Wd3±

White has a lasting positional advantage.

B21) 9...Qb8!?



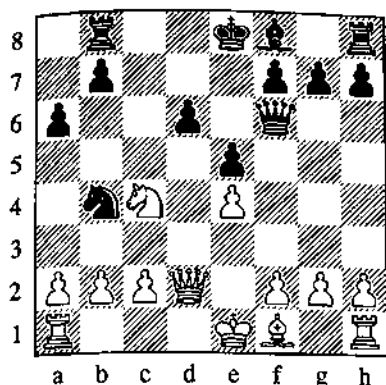
This might appear pointless, but it's essentially a waiting/prophylactic move which starts to make sense when you compare it to 9...Ac8 below. Now if White goes for 10.Qxf6 Wxf6 he will not be able to gain a tempo with Qb6 followed by Qcd5 with a nice bind.

10.a4!?

The challenge for White is to find a useful waiting move of his own. Surprisingly, this one is almost a novelty.

10.Qe2 is an obvious contender, but Black is ready to counter with 10...Qd4!. A logical continuation is 11.Qxf6 Wxf6 12.Qe3 Wd8 13.Qcd5 g6 14.c3 Qxe2 15.Wxe2 Qh6 16.0-0 Qxe3 17.Qxe3 0-0 when Black seems to be fine.

10.Qd5 has been the most popular choice, but I'm not sure what's going on after: 10...Qxd5 11.Qxf6 Wxf6 12.Wxd5 (12.exd5 Qe7) 12...Qb4 13.Wd2



13...d5! 14.exd5 ♖d8 15.♞e3 ♜c5 16.c4 ♗g6 17.a3 ♜xe3 18.♞xb4 ♙d4 19.0-0-0 ♖d6  
Vallejo Pons – Vedmediuc, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

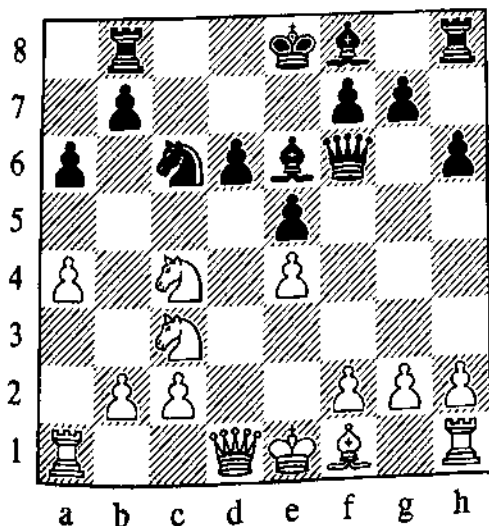
### 10...b6

10...♞d4 11.♞d5 ♜xd5 12.exd5 left Black's knight misplaced in Toews – Koop, Oberhof 2011.

I also considered: 10...♞b4N 11.♞d5!? (11.♜xf6 ♞xf6 12.♞e3 is also sensible) 11...♞bxd5 12.exd5 ♜f5 13.♜d3 (13.♜e2!? can also be considered, as Black's light-squared bishop is currently blocking his future counterplay with ...f5) 13...♜xd3 14.♞xd3 ♜e7 15.♜e3 White should have slightly the more pleasant middlegame.

### 11.♜xf6 ♞xf6

This position was reached in Smet – Owens, email 2009. It looks logical to proceed with:



### 12.♞d5N

Compared with the earlier possibility of 10.♜xf6, White has gained the a2-a4 move almost for free. Black's rook is slightly safer on b8 than on a8 or c8, but apart from that it is not contributing much.

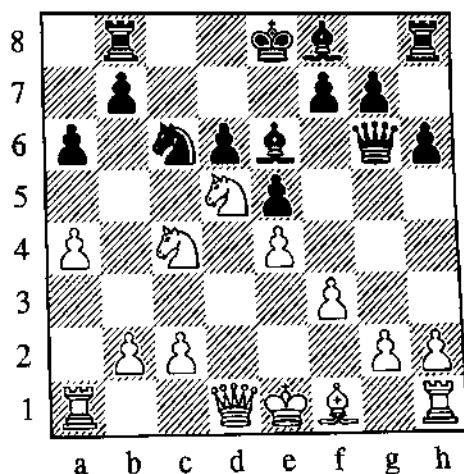
### 12...♞g6

12...♜xd5 13.exd5 ♞e7 14.c3± leaves Black facing the nasty threat of a4-a5 and ♞a4†.

12...♞d8 13.c3± is also pleasant for us.

### 13.f3!

This is the maximalist try, although 13.♞d3 is fine if you feel the text move is weakening and you don't want to have to remember any forcing lines.



### 13...♜xd5

13...♜e7 14.♞xe7±

### 14.♞xd5 ♜e7

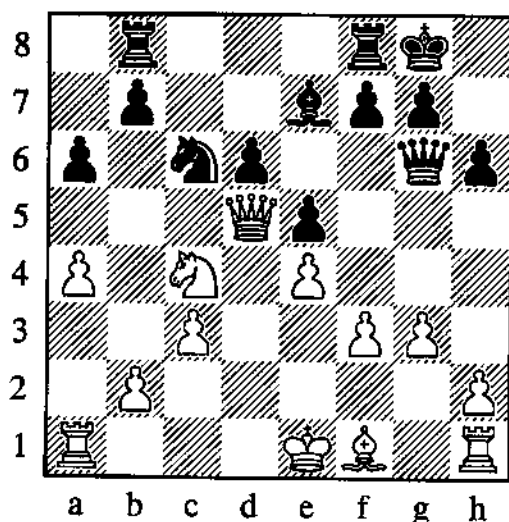
14...♞b4 15.♞d2 d5 is an attempt to exploit White's temporarily misplaced pieces, but after 16.♞xe5! ♞f6 17.f4 ♙d6 18.0-0-0! Black is just a pawn down for minimal compensation.

### 15.c3 0-0 16.g3

Black faces a tough middlegame; the queen is especially out of place on g6. In the best case



he might reach an opposite-coloured-bishop middlegame, but even that will not be any fun for him – and there is no guarantee that he will be able to exchange knights.



16...Wh5

16...h8 17.h3 Wh5 18.g4 Wg6 19.0-0±

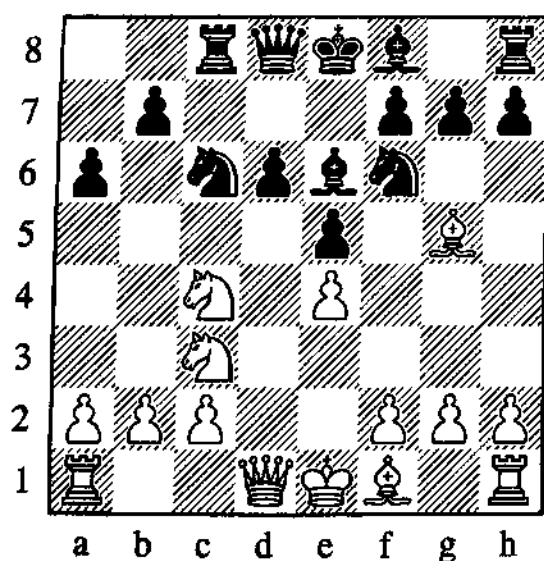
17.g2 h8

17...b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.e3 g5 20.dg4±

18.0-0

White is ready to meet 18...f5 with 19.f4±, and it is not clear what else Black should be doing.

B22) 9...Ec8



10.xf6

10.d5!? xd5 11.xf6 gxf6? 12.Wxd5 b4 13.Wd2 d5 14.exd5 xc2† 15.Wxc2 b4† 16.d1 is certainly interesting – maybe White will end up being better, but I would rather just avoid such lines.

10...Wxf6

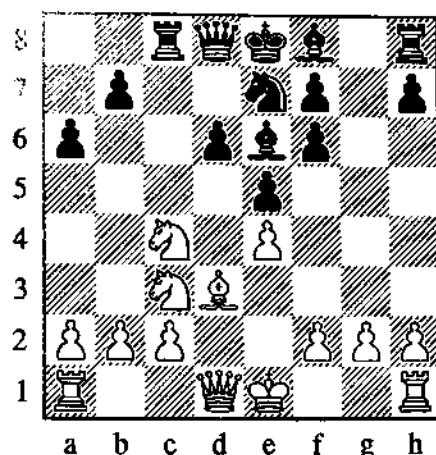
10...gxf6 11.d3!

11.e3 has been much more popular but after 11...h6 White has to deal with some concrete issues. The text move is more accurate, as White makes a useful developing move and delays e3 until it is really necessary. As some players figured out a long time back, that gives Black much less counterplay.

11...de7

11...h6 is pointless without the e3-knight as a target. 12.0-0 g8 13.d5±

11...g8 12.0-0 does not really help Black either.



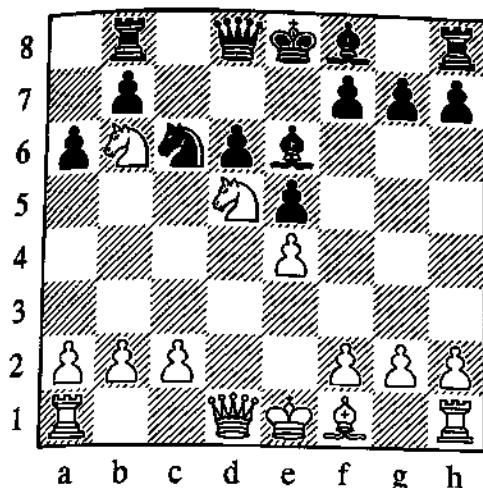
12.e3 h6 13.0-0 xe3 14.fxe3 Wb6 15.Wc1 dg8

Black had an unenviable position in Anand – Morovic Fernandez, Las Palmas 1993. The manoeuvre of the b8-knight to g8 is almost

comical, and White can improve his position in any part of the board he chooses.

### 11. ♖b6 ♜b8 12. ♘cd5 ♜d8

12... ♜g6?! looks strange after 13. ♜d3, as Black will lose the right to castle. 13... ♙e7 14. ♘c7† ♘d8 15. ♘cd5 ♜f5 16. 0-0-0 ♜xe4 17. ♜c3± Rakay – Leroy, corr. 2011.



Black's position is fairly solid, but moves like ... ♜c8-b8 and ... ♜xf6-d8 have wasted far too much time for my liking. Admittedly, White's knights are not ideally placed: they may look nice, but we should be mindful of the fact that Black may play around them and eventually mass his pieces on the kingside. Despite this small cautionary point, we should have more than enough time to complete our development and neutralize Black's hopes for counterplay.

### 13. c3 ♙e7 14. ♙c4 0-0 15. 0-0 ♙g5 16. a4 ♘h8

Black has tried different move orders but he normally arranges his pieces in roughly this way, intending to prepare ... ♜f5.

16... ♘e7 17. ♘xe7† ♙xe7 18. a5± was pleasant for White in Ciolac – San Marco, Bethune 1992. I mentioned that our knights were slightly clumsy, so trading one of them for Black's only knight should help us.

### 17. ♜e2 g6 18. ♜ad1 ♙h6 19. b4 ♜f5 20. ♙d3†

There are other options available, but this one is certainly good enough.

### 20... ♜f4 21. ♜f3 ♜f7 22. ♙c4 ♙f8 23. a5±

Bologan – Cifuentes Parada, Las Palmas 1993. Black is under serious pressure, and must worry about ideas such as ♘e3, ♜a2, or simply doubling rooks on the d-file.

## Conclusion

We started by checking the sideline 6... ♙h6, which is not a bad move, but at the same time does not really challenge White, and instead gives us an enduring edge with the two bishops. The Sveshnikov proper occurs after 6... ♙d6, when 7. ♙g5 a6 8. ♘a3 reaches our main starting point.

8... ♙e7 is often overlooked, but it contains several tricky points – the first one being the choice of move order for White. For reasons explained earlier, I think it's important to start with 9. ♘c4 and hold back with ♙xf6 for another move at least. I think White keeps an edge in all lines, but Black has several options, and it is worth checking them because each one requires handling in a different way.

8... ♙e6 9. ♘c4 is an old line which has fallen out of fashion from Black's point of view – deservedly, in my view. 9... ♜b8!? is an interesting nuance but 10. a4 seems like a good reply. The traditional 9... ♜c8 allows us to establish a strong clamp with the knights on b6 and d5, and you can get an excellent position by following Bologan's example shown above.





12...f5

12...♙xd5? 13.exd5 ♘e7 14.♖g4 sees White dominate the light squares.

12...♘e7?! 13.♘xe7 ♖xe7 14.0-0 gives Black a worse version of the main line, as his bishop should not be on e6.

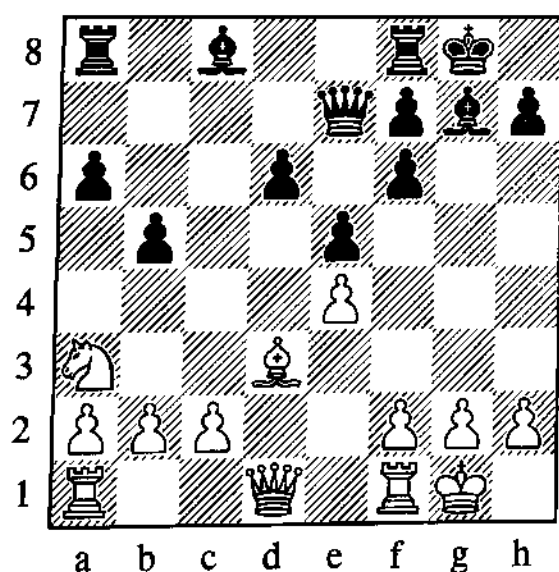
12...0-0?! 13.♖f3 prevents ...f5, and with it any future counterplay from Black. 13...♗b8 14.0-0 b4 15.♘c4± Hooft – Wafa, Tromsø (ol) 2014.

13.♘xb5

Transposing to Chapters 24-26.

12.♘xe7 ♖xe7 13.0-0 0-0

13...f5 14.c4 gives Black nothing better than transposing to the main line with 14...0-0, as he can't do much with his king stuck in the centre. Instead after 14...♙b7? 15.♖f3± Black is unable to maintain the tension in the centre.



14.c4 f5

Black has to strive for counterplay, otherwise White will just bring the knight to e3 and Black will have no play at all. This is the first critical juncture – White can't take on f5 yet because of ...e4 when all Black's pieces are getting into action, but he can instead aim for exf5 after suitable preparation. White has two major options, my preference being:

15.♖h5!

White intends to play exf5 and meet ...e4 with ♖ae1. The queen also sets up some tactics and future attacking possibilities on the kingside. Note that ...fxe4 is currently impossible, and ...f4 is also unlikely because it will block Black's attempts to activate the g7-bishop.

15.♖e2 is the alternative, just supporting the centre and planning f2-f3 if required. However, things may get tricky if Black arranges to play ...fxe4 followed by ...f5 and possibly a ...d5 sacrifice. Maybe it still deserves some attention, but I personally prefer the more forcing ♖h5 plan.

15...♗b8

This is the usual move, just preparing ...fxe4.

It's too early for 15...bxc4?! – Black is not yet ready for sacrifices in the centre. 16.♘xc4 ♗b8 (16...d5 17.exd5 e4 18.♙e2 ♖f6 19.♖ad1 ♗b8 20.f3 e3 21.f4± Kokarev – Krapivin, Vladimir 2008.) 17.♘e3± White's pieces are perfectly placed and Black's counterplay is under control.

15...f4?! just removes the pressure on the centre, so White's life is easy: 16.cxb5 f5 (16...♙h8 17.bxa6 ♙f6 18.♙c4 ♗g8 19.♖xf7± Amonatov – Krapivin, Moscow 2006.) 17.exf5 e4 18.f6 ♙xf6 19.♖ae1±

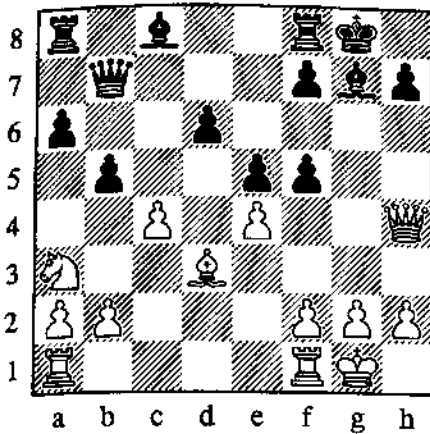
15...♖b7

This is an attempt to try and force White to play exf5.

16.♖h4!

16.♖fe1 d5! is a typical idea, and the key to Black's play. 17.exd5 e4 18.♙f1 ♙xb2∞ Harikrishna – Wang Yue, Zaozhuang 2012. The text move is an important improvement, the idea being to meet ...d5 with exf5, when ...e4 will be ineffective due to f5-f6.





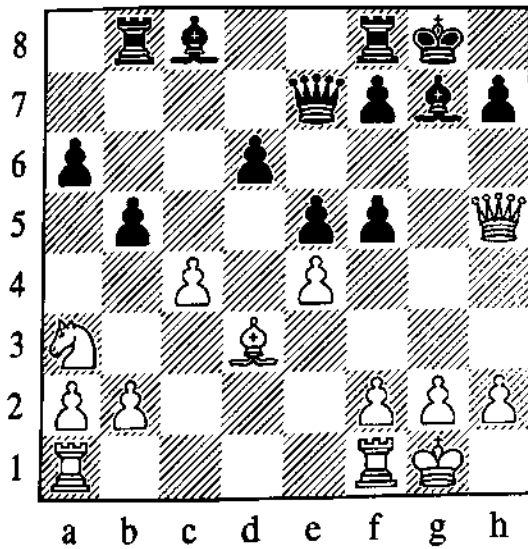
16...♞e8

16...f4 17.cxb5±

17.♞fe1±

Here too, Black's central break does not work:

17...d5?! 18.exf5 e4 19.f6±

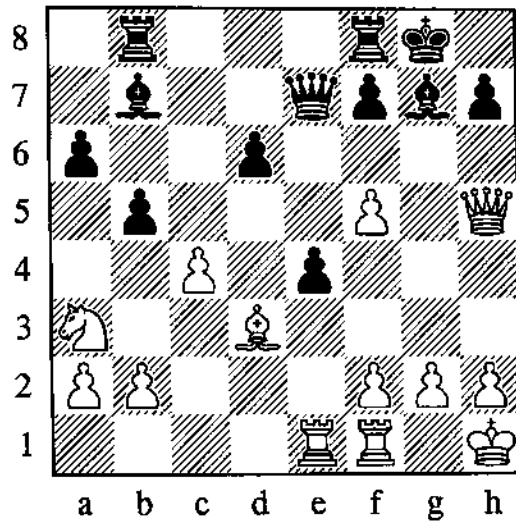


16.exf5 e4 17.♞ae1 ♙b7

This critical position has been thoroughly explored. Black is willing to give away his queenside pawns to get a strong centre with ...d5. Even more importantly, he is playing against the activation of the white pieces, particularly the a3-knight. Moreover, it will not be easy to go after the black king in these lines since the dark-squared bishop does an admirable job. We will start by looking at an interesting novelty in A) 18.♙h1!N, before moving on to my main suggestion of B) 18.♞e3!.

18.♞g4 has been debated, with unclear results, in a lot of games.

A) 18.♙h1!N



Removing the king from checks and creating the threat of ♙xe4 followed by f2-f3, or just f2-f3 immediately.

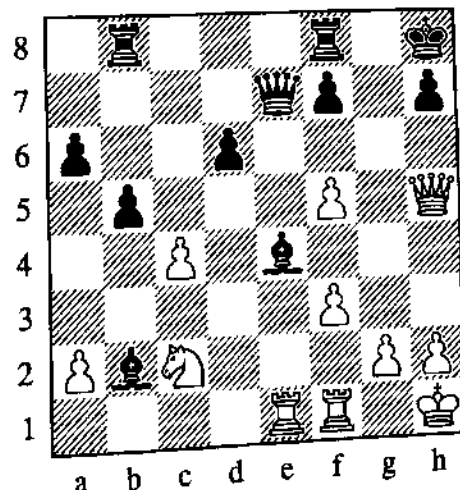
18...bxc4!

This would be a tough decision in a practical game, as there are many plausible alternatives, but all of them have certain problems:

18...♙h8 19.♙xe4! ♙xe4 20.f3 ♙xf3 21.♞xf3±

18...♞e5 19.f3! ♞xb2 20.fxe4± is great for White, since 20...♞xa3? loses to 21.f6.

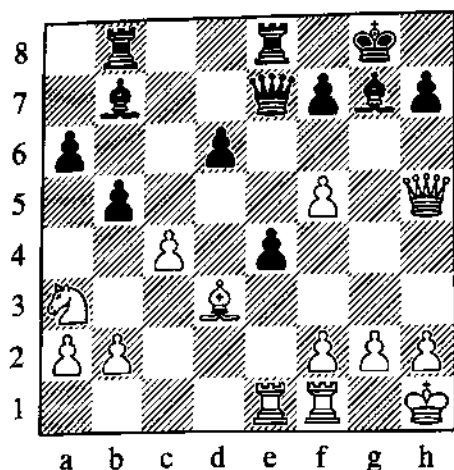
18...♙xb2 19.♙c2 ♙h8 (19...♞fe8 20.f3 bxc4 21.♙xc4 d5 22.♙b3↑) 20.♙xe4 ♙xe4 21.f3



21... $\text{xf3}$  (21... $\text{bxc4}$  22. $\text{fxe4}\pm$ ) 22. $\text{xf3}$   $\text{a7}$   
 23. $\text{c5!}$  (23. $\text{f6}$   $\text{c5!}$ ) The last move is a nice  
 touch, since 23... $\text{xc5?}$  is met by 24. $\text{h3}$ , and  
 23... $\text{dxc5?}$  takes away the ... $\text{c5}$  defence after  
 24. $\text{f6}$ .

A final alternative is:

18... $\text{fe8}$

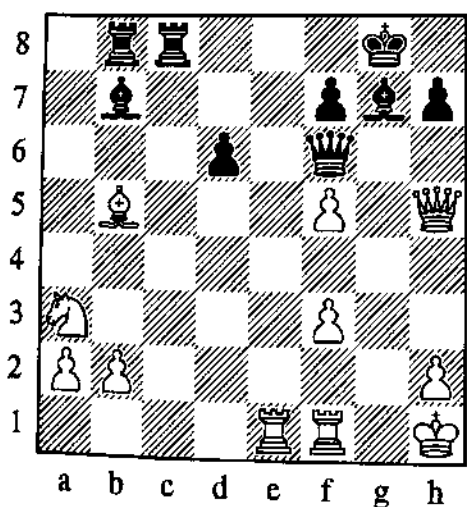


19. $\text{cxb5!}$

19. $\text{f3 exf3!}$  20. $\text{fxe7 fxe2}\dagger$  21. $\text{g1 fxe7}$  is  
 rather messy, so we should hold the f-pawn  
 back for a moment.

19... $\text{axb5}$

19... $\text{d5}$  20. $\text{bxa6 c6}$  21. $\text{f3 f6}$  22. $\text{fxe4 dxe4}$   
 23. $\text{e2 fxb2}$  24. $\text{c4 fxa2}$  25. $\text{e3}\pm$   
 20. $\text{xb5 fxc8}$  21. $\text{f3 exf3}$  22. $\text{gxf3 f6}$



23. $\text{d3!? d4}$

After 23... $\text{xb2}$  24. $\text{c4}$  White is getting  
 nicely coordinated.

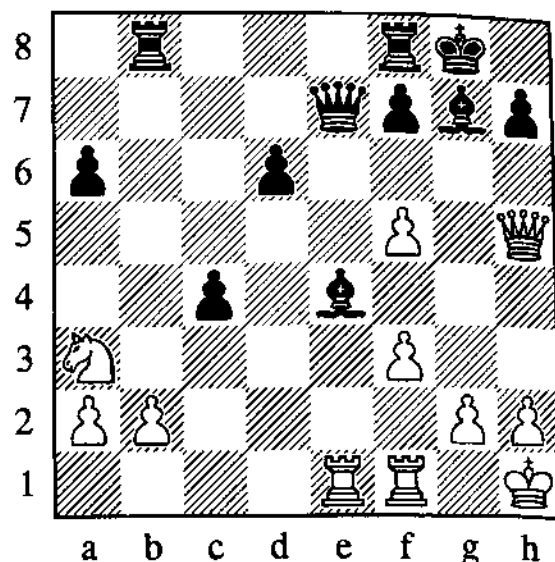
24. $\text{e4 d5}$  25. $\text{b5}$

25. $\text{b1 fxb2}$  seems okay for Black.

25... $\text{xb2}$  26. $\text{d3}$

White keeps some initiative in a complicated  
 position.

19. $\text{xe4 xe4}$  20. $\text{f3}$



20... $\text{fc8!}$

20... $\text{f6!?}$  21. $\text{fxe4 fxc8}$  transposes to the  
 note with 21... $\text{f6}$  below.

21. $\text{fxe4}$

21... $\text{xe4 f6}$  22. $\text{fxc4 d5}$  23. $\text{fxc8}\dagger \text{xc8}\pm$

21... $\text{xb2!}$

This seems to lead to a forced draw after  
 a series of accurate moves from both sides,  
 although the line looks rather worrying for  
 Black at first. Alternatives fall short of equality:

21... $\text{e5}$  22. $\text{f6 fxf6}$  23. $\text{e5 fxe5}$  24. $\text{g4}\dagger$   
 $\text{h8}$  25. $\text{xc4 fg8}$  26. $\text{e4 e6}$  27. $\text{b3}\pm$

21... $\text{f6!?}$

This is a more human continuation to avoid  
 the scary pawn sacrifices.

22. $\text{e2}$

22. $\text{e5!? dxe5}$  23. $\text{e2}$  could be more pleasant  
 for White, but the computer doesn't agree.

The text move is a more solid choice.

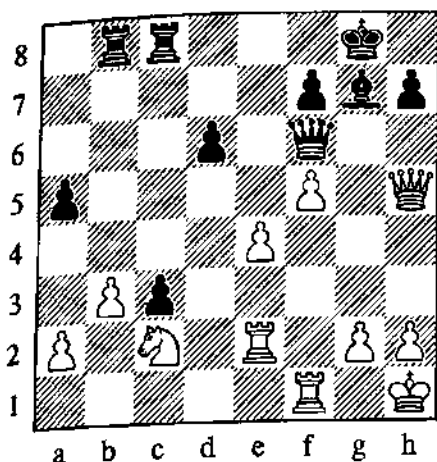
22... $\text{c3}$

22... $\text{fxb2?}$  23. $\text{fxb2 fxb2}$  24. $\text{f6}$  wins.



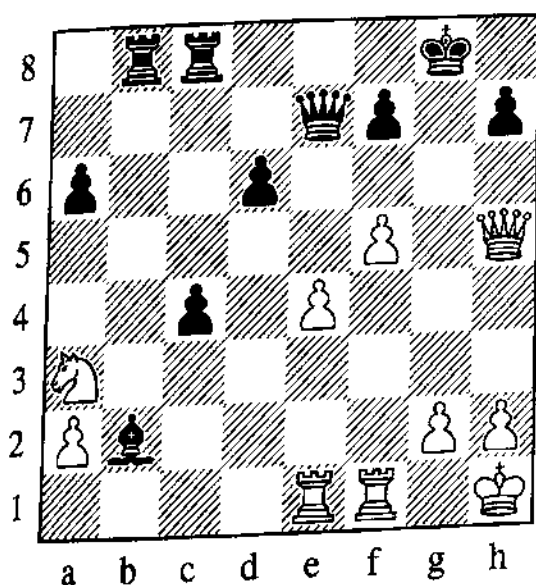
23.b3 a5 24.♘c2

White is a pawn up and can regroup his pieces accordingly.



24...♙h6 25.♙xh6

25.♙g4!? is also possible: 25...♙h8 26.♙e3  
♙e5 27.♙h3 ♙g7 28.♙e2±  
25...♙xh6 26.♙f3 ♙c5 27.g4 ♙d2 28.♙d3±



22.e5!

22.♘c2 f6 23.♘e3 ♙e5 seems safe for Black.

22...♙h8!

Another precise move.

22...dxe5 23.♙g4† ♙f8 24.♘xc4 f6 25.♙e4±  
looks unpleasant for Black.

23.f6

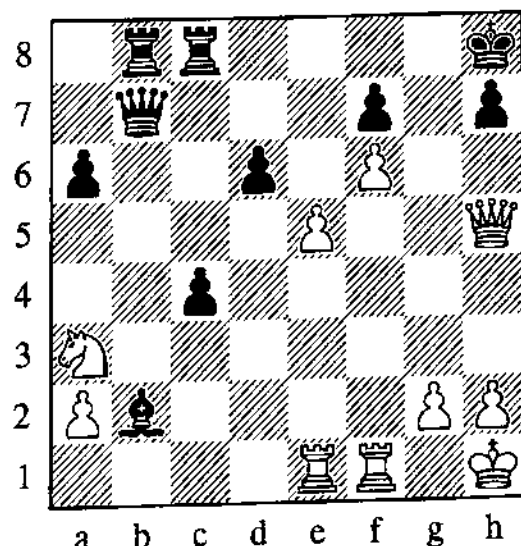
23.e6 f6 24.♘c2 could be an interesting

position to analyse, but Black doesn't appear to be in immediate danger.

23...♙b7!

Another only move.

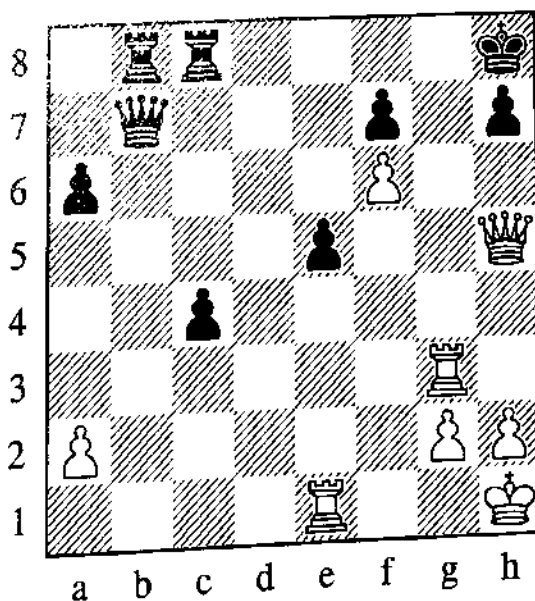
23...♙f8? 24.♙e4 is winning for White.



24.♙f3 ♙xa3

Black can also equalize with: 24...♙g8  
25.e6 ♙xa3 (25...fxe6? 26.f7 ♙gf8 27.♘xc4±)  
26.exf7 ♙gf8 27.♙xa3 ♙xf7=

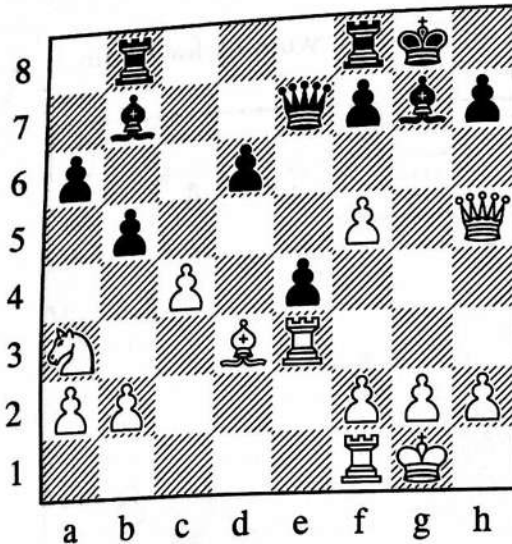
25.♙xa3 dxe5 26.♙g3



26...♙e4! 27.♙g1 ♙g8 28.♙xg8† ♙xg8  
29.♙xf7 c3 30.♙c7 ♙xg2 31.♙xg2 ♙e1†=

It's a draw in the end, but the novelty came at move 18, so it would be incredibly hard for Black to find all these moves over the board.

### B) 18. ♖e3!?

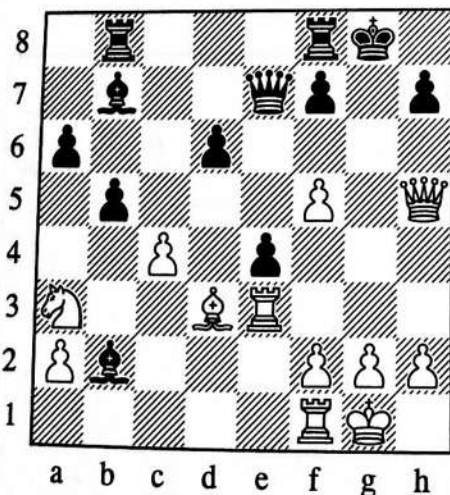


This has only been the third most popular choice, but I find it the most appealing move.

### 18... bxc4

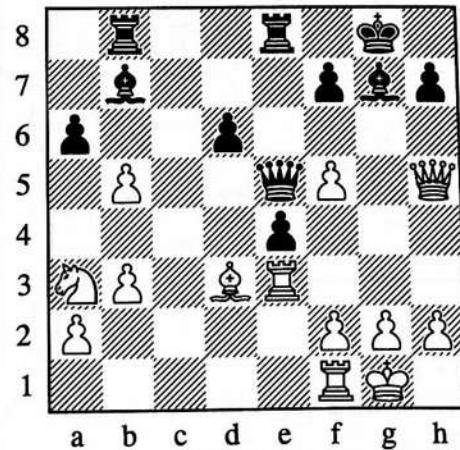
Black hardly ever plays anything else. A few brief examples:

### 18... ♕xb2



19. ♕xe4! (19. ♖c2!? is also promising, but there is no need for us to deviate) 19... ♕xe4 20. ♖g4+ ♖h8 21. ♖xe4 ♖f6 (21... ♖b7 22. ♖c2 ♖g8 23. ♖h4 ♖be8 24. ♖fe1 bxc4 25. g3±) 22. ♖c2 bxc4 23. ♖xc4± Mueller – Richter, Germany 1998.

In the event of 18... ♖e5 19. b3! Black's pieces are misplaced – particularly the queen on e5, which is liable to be hit by ♖c4 at any moment. 19... ♖fe8 20. cxb5!N (20. ♕e2 ♕c8 21. ♕g4 ♖f6 22. ♖h3 h6∞ Luther – Wu Wenjin, Elista 1998)

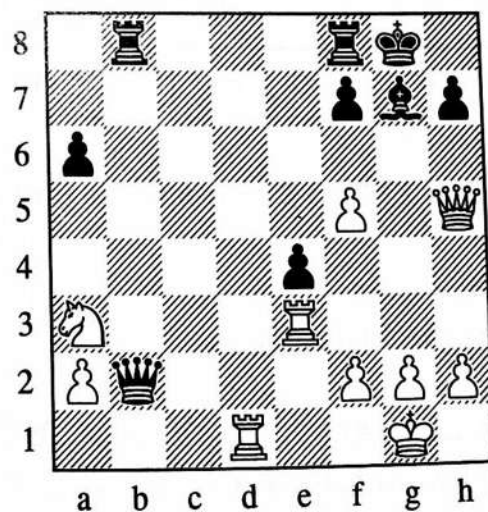


20... d5 (20... axb5 21. ♕xb5±) 21. bxa6 ♕a8 22. ♕e2± Black does not have as much counterplay as in some analogous positions, and he must watch out for ♖h3 ideas.

### 19. ♕xc4

Now B1) 19... ♖e5 deserves serious attention, although B2) 19... d5 is the most popular and natural continuation.

19... ♖e5 20. ♖d1 d5 21. ♕xd5 ♕xd5 22. ♖xd5 ♖xb2 23. ♖d1! is a nice variation:



23... ♖fd8 (23... ♖xa2! loses to 24. f6! ♕xf6 25. ♖g3+ ♕g7 26. ♖e5! f6 27. ♖c7+–) 24. ♖de1±



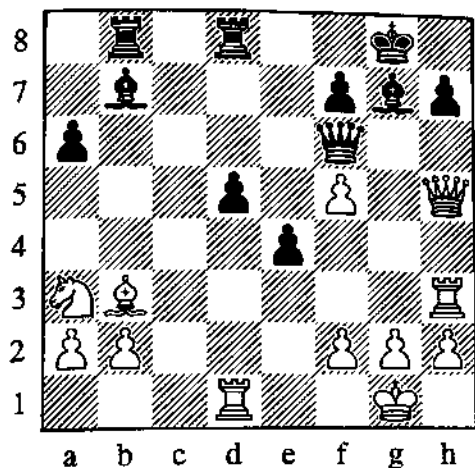
(or 24.♙f1±) White's knight will get back into the game, and the structure will be similar to that after 19...d5. White can continue to exert pressure without taking much risk.

19...♙f8!? 20.♙h3 d5

20...h6 21.♙g3 d5 22.♙b3 ♖h8 23.♘c2±

Since ...d4 isn't possible, White will play ♘e3 with an excellent position.

21.♙b3 ♙f6 22.♙d1!



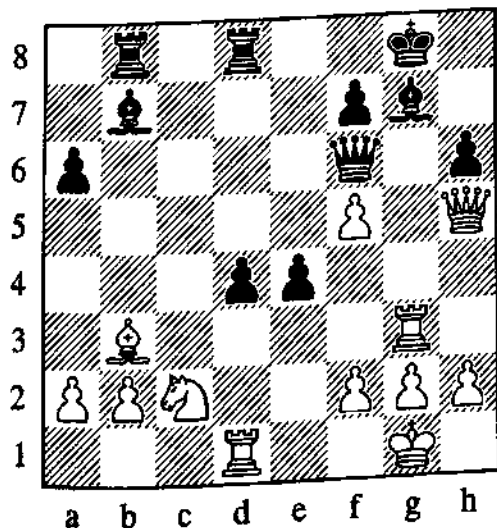
White wants to provoke ...d4, which will allow the knight to jump to e4 right away, rather than being stuck on c2, as occurs in variation B1 below.

22...h6

After 22...a5 23.♘c2! Black can't allow a blockade on d4, but 23...d4 runs into 24.♙xd4! ♙xd4 25.♘xd4 ♙xd4? 26.♙xf7± ♖h8 27.♙xh7± ♖xh7 28.♙h5± and wins.

23.♘c2 d4 24.♙g3!

Threatening ♙g6.



24...♙d5

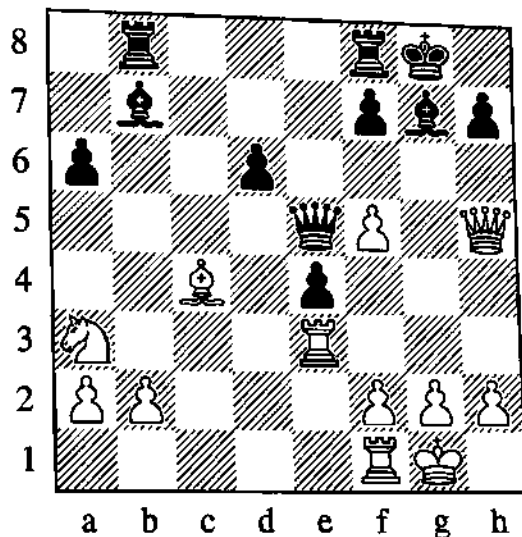
24...♖h8 25.♙xf7 ♙c8 26.♙b3 ♙xb3

27.♙xb3±

25.♙xd5 ♙xd5 26.♘e3±

And the knight gets out.

B1) 19...♙e5



Black wants to avoid the f5-f6 trick and get the typical ...d5-d4 formation in the centre. The downside is that it gives White time to start operations on the kingside.

20.♙h3 h6 21.♘c2!?

This is connected with a piece sacrifice.

It is also possible to play without giving up material:

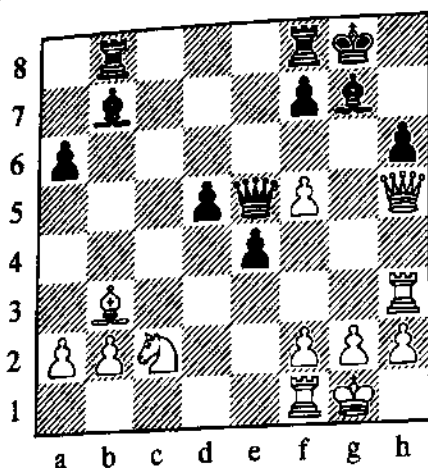
21.♙b3

If White could get his knight to the blockading square on d4 then the game would essentially be over, so Black has to fight against that.

21...d5 22.♘c2!?

Also interesting is: 22.♙d1 ♙bd8 Preparing against ♘c2. (22...d4? 23.♙g6!±) 23.♘c2 d4 24.♙g3 ♖h8 25.♙xf7 ♙c8 26.♙xg7!? ♙xg7 27.♙g6 ♖g8∞ The last move is necessary prevent ♘xd4. The resulting situation is similar to the line below after 22.♘c2, but this version is even harder to assess.

Black has a little less counterplay due to his rook's positioning on d8, but the question is how White can improve. There are some ideas like  $\text{Bd2}$  and  $\text{Bd1}$  to provoke ...d3, which will give White the excellent e3-square for the knight, but it's hard to form any definite conclusions due to the number of options for both sides.



22...d4 23.Bg3!

Now Black is forced to give up the f7-pawn.

23...Ch8

23...Bbd8?! 24.Bg6! Bd6 25.f6 Bxf6

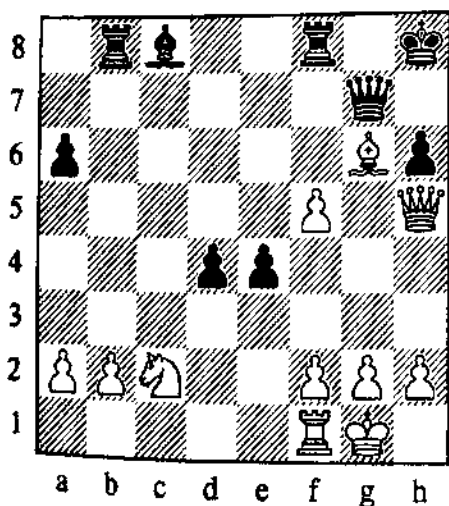
26.Bxf6 Bxf6 27.Qxd4+

24.Qxf7 Qc8

The position remains rather messy. It's interesting to try and assess the position after the following exchange sac:

25.Bxg7!? Bxg7 26.Qg6

The kingside is somewhat fixed, and it's hard for either side to make improvements. Perhaps a better version of this can be obtained after 22.Bd1 somehow.



26...Qg8!

Avoiding Qxd4.

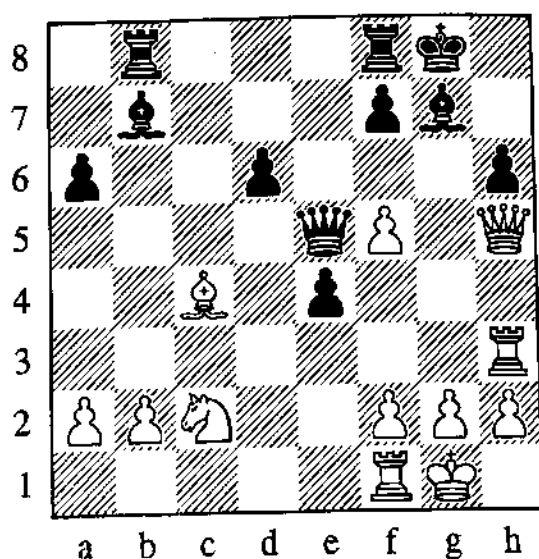
26...Bxb2 27.Qxd4 looks dangerous for Black, despite the computer's assured 0.00 assessment. 27...Bd2 28.Qe2 Bxa2 (28...a5 29.h4 Qa6 30.Bel±) 29.h4!? I would definitely prefer White.

27.b3

27.Bd1 Bxb2 28.Qxd4 Bd8=

27...Bb5 28.Bg4

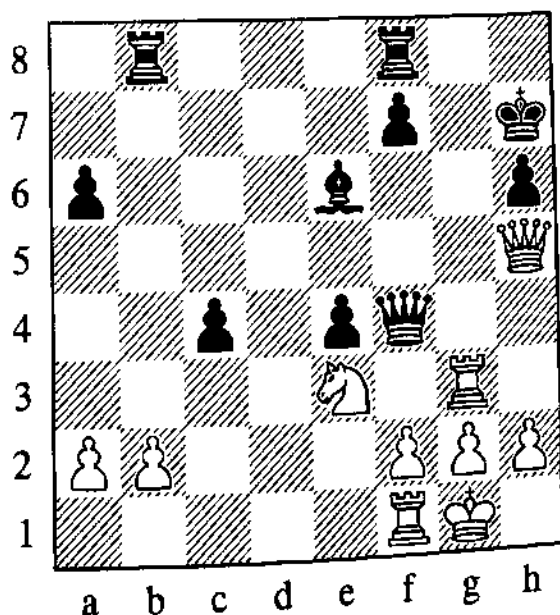
Black seems to be okay after ...Qxf5, either here or after some preparation.



21...d5 22.Qe3!?

This forces Black to find a series of 'only moves':

22...dxc4 23.Qg4 Bf4 24.f6 Qc8! 25.fxc7 Qxg7 26.Bg3 Ch7 27.Qe3 Qe6





The computer thinks Black is safe here, but I feel the position could become difficult for him if White can just consolidate. The well-placed knight is clearly better than the bishop, and the g3-rook gives us some hope for a future initiative. We must watch out for ...f5-f4 of course, but we have the option of blockading with f2-f4 whenever Black moves his queen. The only problem for White is his b2-pawn, but he can solve it with some precise play.

### 28.♙e2!N

Improving over 28.♙d1 ♙e5 29.♘g4 ♙xc4 30.♙xc4 ♖xb2+ as played in Czebe – Korpics, Budapest 1993.

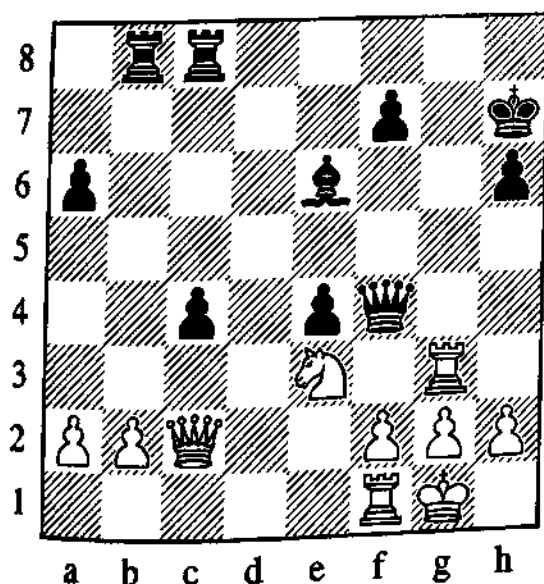
After the text move there are a lot of options for both sides, but the general ideas remain similar. I will therefore present a few lines to show the ideas described above, without trying to analyse things exhaustively.

### 28...♜fc8

After 28...♙e5 29.♘xc4 ♙xc4 30.♙xc4 ♖xb2 31.♙xa6 Black is struggling to equalize.

### 29.♙c2!

A nice way of discouraging ...♙e5.



### 29...♜b5!?

Preparing against ♙c3.

29...♙e5? 30.f4! is one of the points of White's last move.

29...h5 30.♘d1±

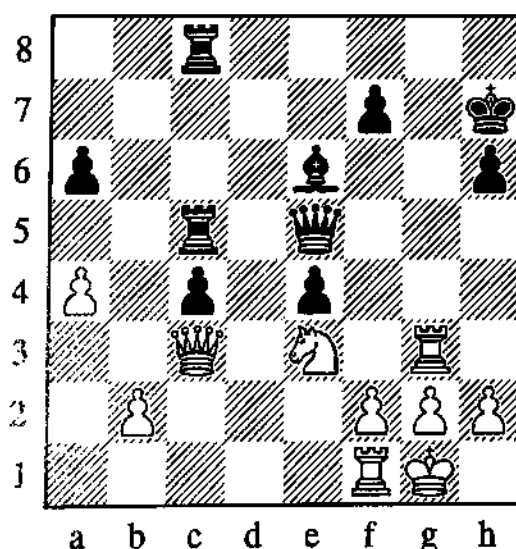
29...f5 30.♙c3 ♙c7 31.♙f6 (31.f4!? ♜d8 32.b3 ♜d3 33.♙f6 ♙f7 34.♙xf7† ♙xf7 35.bxc4 ♙e6 36.♜c1 may be better for White as well) 31...♙f7 32.♙xf7† ♙xf7 33.♘xf5 ♙e6 34.♘d6±

### 30.a4 ♜bc5

30...♜g5 31.♜xg5 hxg5 32.♙c3±

### 31.♙c3 ♙e5

31...♜g8 32.♜xg8 ♘xg8 33.♜d1±



32.f4!? ♙xc3 33.bxc3 ♙d7

33...f5 34.♜b1± gives White a nice endgame.

### 34.♜d1!?

34.f5 ♙xa4 35.♜f4 ♙d7=

### 34...♙xa4 35.♜d6

Surprisingly enough, White maintains some pressure here. There are threats against the king, and the a-pawn will take a long time to become dangerous.

35...♜8c6 36.♜d4 ♜b6

36...♜c7 37.f5±

**37.h3**

Creating a safe square for the king.

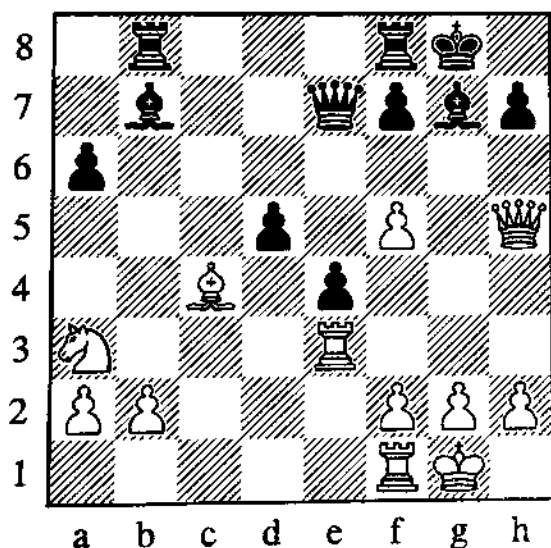
**37...f5**

37...a5 38.f5! ♔c6 39.♞d6→

**38.♞d8**

Threatening ♞f8.

38...♞f6 39.♞gg8→

**B2) 19...d5****20.♔xd5!**

20.f6 has not been played but it leads to the same thing.

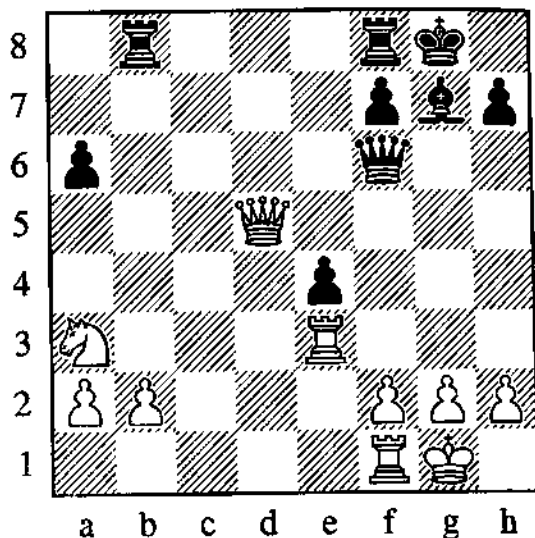
**20...♔xd5 21.f6 ♞xf6**

21...♔xf6? occurred in Brod – Wiedermann, Vienna 2006, when White inserted a check on g3. Instead the straightforward 22.♞xd5N just gives White a better version of the main line, as White will gain a tempo with ♞xe4 and Black's king is more exposed.

**22.♞xd5**

The position has simplified considerably, and it will almost certainly lead to a situation where White has three pawns against two on the kingside, with Black having a lone a-pawn. As long as White's pieces are properly coordinated, he should be able to switch between both

flanks, targeting the weak a6-pawn or creating threats on the kingside. Having queens on the board obviously helps White because of his safer king. At the same time, if we can win the a-pawn, the future endgame with rook, knight and three pawns versus rook, bishop and two pawns will be unpleasant for Black to defend. Now that we have established the main plans, let's see some of these ideas in action.

**22...♞xb2**

22...♞xb2 23.♔c4! ♞xa2 24.♞xe4N (24.♞g3 has been played, but after 24...♞b1 White has nothing more than a draw) This simple novelty leads to similar positions to the main line, with the slight advantage that Black's queen is rather out of play on a2. 24...♞b1 25.g3± White is in no hurry to try and mate his opponent, and will instead aim for sustained pressure.

It is also worth checking:

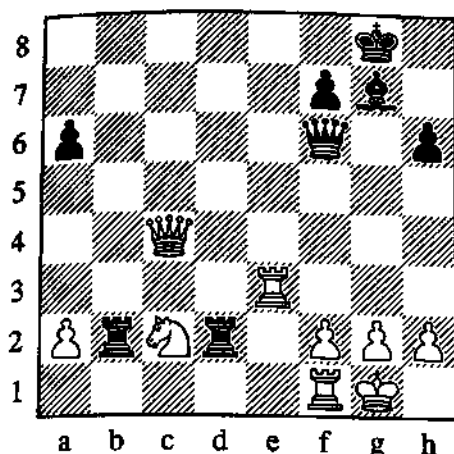
22...♞fd8N 23.♞xe4 ♞xb2 24.♞c4!

24.♔c4 ♞xa2 25.h3 gives us a slightly inferior version of the 22...♞xb2 line, as Black is more active and we can't meet ...♞a1 with the nice ♔e3 move.

The text move is more challenging, as it forces Black to go out of his way to pick up the a-pawn. This will give White time to bring the knight into the game and develop an initiative.



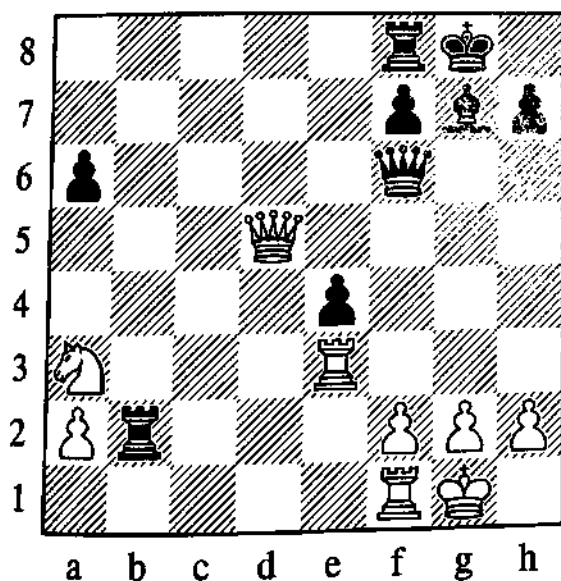
24...h6 25.♖c2 ♖d2  
25...♗g6 26.♖e1±



26.♖e1! ♖xa2 27.♖f3 ♖dc2 28.♖e8† ♔h7  
29.♗d5 ♖a4

29...a5? 30.♖e5+–  
30.♗h5!±

The main threat is h2-h4 followed by ♖g5†, but the immediate ♖g5† and ♗xf7 is also dangerous.



23.♖c4!

23.♖xe4 has been played in almost all the games, but after 23...♖d8 24.♗c4 Black can equalize with: 24...h6! ♗N Intending ...♖dd2. 25.♖c2 ♗c3! =

23...♖xa2 24.♖xe4 ♖d8  
24...♗d8 25.♗h5±

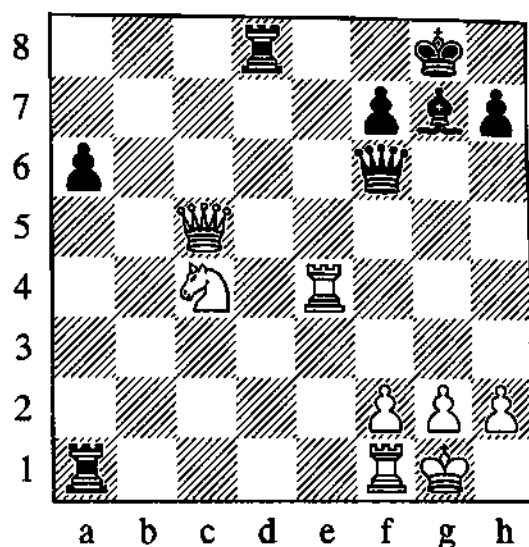
25.♗c5

25.♗h5!?N could also be considered, but the text move seems more harmonious to me.

25...♖a1

Black is unable to force a queen exchange, so his best bet is to simplify the position by trading off the rook on a2.

25...♖a4 is possible, but the pin is of no consequence after 26.h3±.



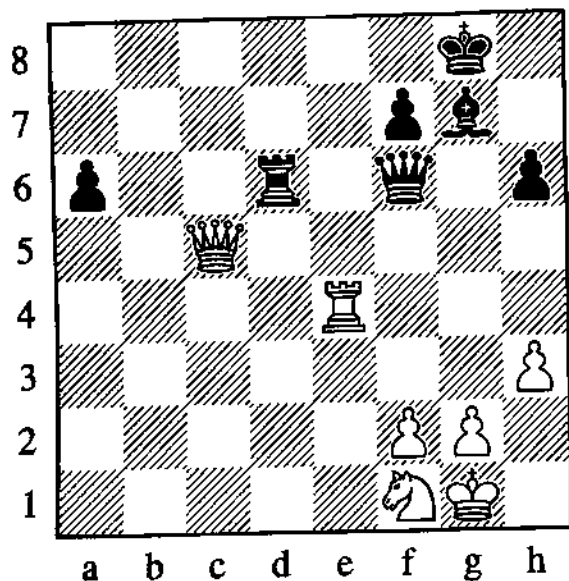
26.♖e3! ♖xf1† 27.♖xf1

The only game involving 23.♖c4! was a correspondence encounter, which was soon agreed drawn – but that just shows the difference between correspondence and over-the-board chess. Defending Black's position would be unpleasant in a practical game without engine assistance. All of Black's moves look rather similar, and he can do little but sit and wait, while White has so many pleasant choices – the knight can go to e3 or g3, the rook to a4, f4, or g4, and the queen can roam all over the board.

27...h6

27...♗g6 28.♖a4 h6 29.h3 does not change much, for example: 29...♗e6 30.♗a7 ♖d6 31.♖e3 ♗c8 32.♖g4±

## 28.h3 ♖d6



## 29.♘e3N

29.♘g3 ♖h7 30.♖h2 was agreed drawn in Pietruske – Siigur, email 2008, but White's position would be clearly preferable in a practical game of course.

29.g3!N is another idea, but the text move seems most natural to me.

## 29...♞c6 30.♞b4±

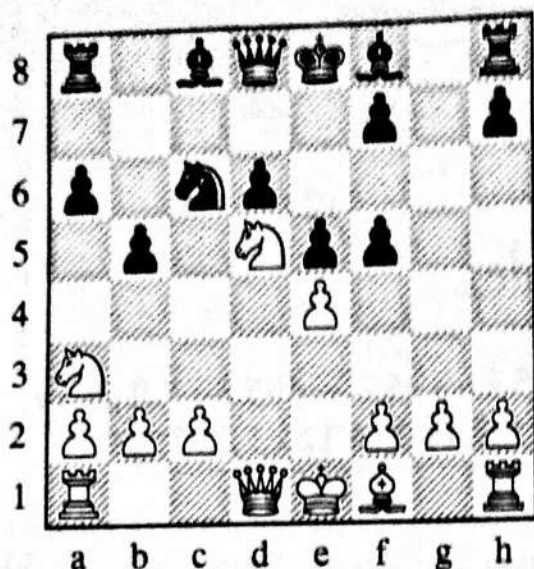
## Conclusion

10...♔g7 is a slightly more cautious move than 10...f5, but it still presents plenty of challenges. After the logical sequence of 11.♔d3 ♘e7 12.♘xe7 ♞xe7 13.0–0 0–0 14.c4 f5 15.♞h5!? ♞b8 16.exf5 e4 17.♞ae1 ♔b7, we reached an important branching point. The new idea of 18.♖h1!N may not be the strongest move in an absolute sense, but it contains some tricky points and its surprise value makes it a useful practical weapon.

18.♞e3!? is my main weapon, when 18...bxc4 19.♔xc4 leaves Black at a crossroads. 19...♞e5 is a sharp move leading to forcing lines, but White's advantage in king safety gives him the easier choice and his initiative may endure even after a queen exchange. 19...d5 is more popular, but it leads by force to a simplified position where White can put Black under sustained pressure without much risk at all.



1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6  
5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6 7.♕g5 a6 8.♗a3 b5  
9.♕xf6 gxf6 10.♗d5 f5



### 11.♗d3

In view of the line I am recommending, you might consider 11.c3 ♕g7 12.♗xb5 axb5 13.♕xb5 to be a tempting option. Indeed, after 13...♗d7 we reach a position examined in the final two chapters, having avoided the interesting 14...♖c8!? as covered in this chapter. Unfortunately 13...♗b7! is a considerable improvement: the bishop is much better placed here than on d7, and after 14.exf5 0-0 Black already has threats like ...♗d4 which give him a great position.

### 11...♗e6 12.c3 ♕g7

12...♗xd5 13.exd5 ♗e7 14.♗xb5 ♕g7 transposes to variation A below.

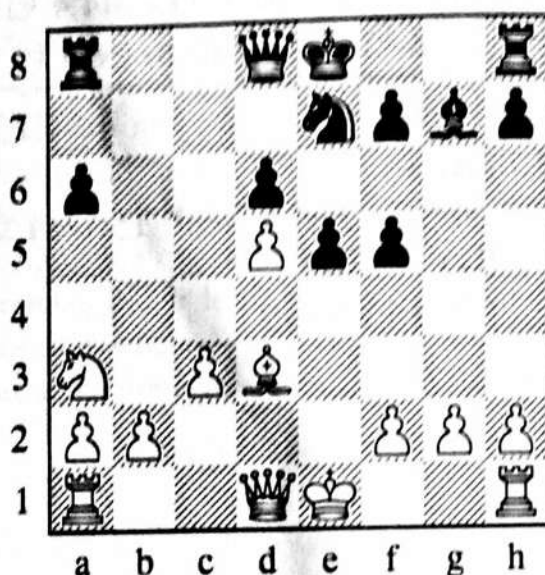
### 13.♗xb5

White has various other options of course, both here and on the previous two moves. My main reason for choosing this particular line is that it leads to positions of a drastically different character from most Sveshnikov variations. Most Sveshnikov players will be looking for opportunities to sacrifice a pawn or two in order to unleash the dynamic potential of Black's pawn centre and bishop pair. By

giving up a piece for three pawns, I want to reverse the roles, so that White will have the initiative and excellent piece activity – just with one piece less.

Having said all that, we must remember that Black is not forced to accept the offer. We will start by looking at A) 13...♗xd5, which amounts to a pawn sacrifice from Black, before analysing the critical B) 13...axb5.

### A) 13...♗xd5 14.exd5 ♗e7 15.♗a3



### 15...0-0

We should also consider:

### 15...e4 16.♖a4†!

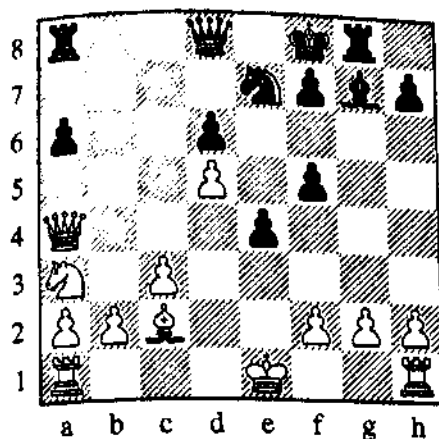
16.♗c2 ♗g6!? (16...♖b8!? is also interesting, but it doesn't seem to be required) 17.0-0 (17.♖h5 is met by 17...♖f6 when ...♗f4 is already a threat) 17...♖g5 Black prevents ♖h5 and has interesting counterplay, while 18.♗a4† ♗f8 is not such a big deal.

### 16...♗f8 17.♗c2

Intending long castling. Black's king is badly misplaced, especially after White opens the position with a timely f2-f3.

### 17...♖g8

R.A. Romanov – Telepnev, email 2009.



18.g3!N

18.0-0-0!?N ♖h6† 19.♗b1 ♜xg2 20.f3† is also interesting, but the text move is simpler.  
18...♘g6 19.0-0-0±

16.0-0 e4 17.♙c2

17.♙e2 f4 will eventually lead to a blockade involving f2-f3 and ...e3, the consequences of which are hard to assess. I have a feeling that the computer may be underestimating Black's attacking chances, so I would rather just avoid that scenario.

17...♞b6!?

Interestingly, I found this rare move to be Black's most challenging option. Here are a few of his other ideas:

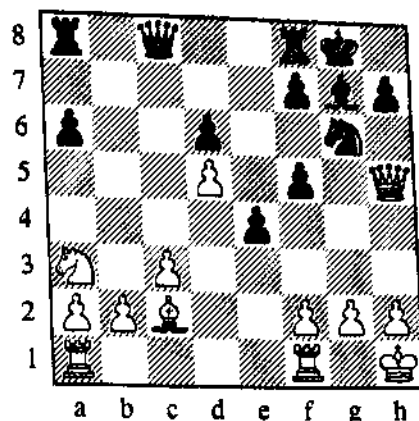
17...♞c8 18.♙h1!N White follows the familiar plan of preparing f2-f3 to erode Black's centre. (18.♞h5 has been played several times, but the position after 18...♞c5!? is not at all clear) 18...♞c5 (18...♘g6 19.f3±) 19.f3 ♜xd5 20.♞e2±

The most common move has been:

17...♘g6 18.♞h5 ♞c8

18...♞f6 19.f4!± is the key difference compared to the 15...e4 16.♙c2 ♘g6! line mentioned earlier. Black has no counterplay against our blockade.

19.♙h1!N



Once again preparing f2-f3 or f2-f4.

The immediate 19.f4 ♞c5† would be okay for Black.

19...♞b8

Since the queen is badly placed on c8, moves like ...♘f4 will achieve nothing.

20.♞ab1±

Finally, I checked a different queen move:

17...♞a5 18.♙h1!N

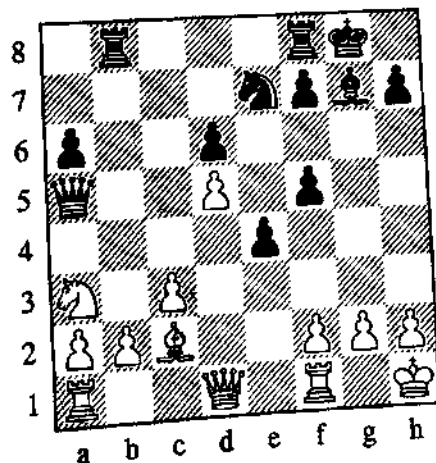
The same plan works well yet again. Neither ...♞xd5 nor ...♘xd5 is really a threat, so we can just prepare f2-f3 as usual.

18...♞ab8

18...♞xd5 19.♞xd5 ♘xd5 20.♘c4±

18...♘xd5 19.♙b3 ♘f4 20.♘c4 ♞c5

21.♞xd6±

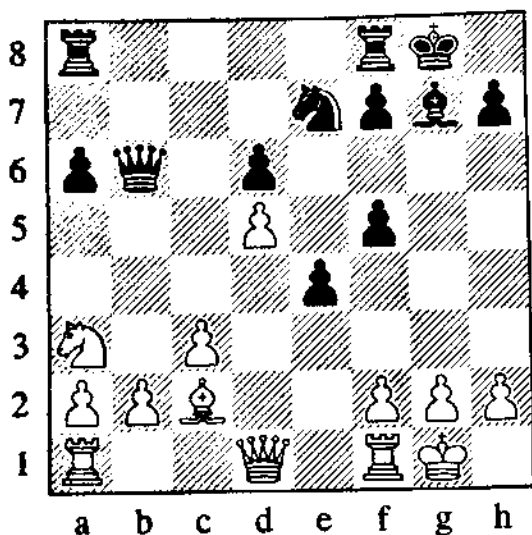


19.♙b3 ♞c5 20.f3 a5 21.♞b1!?

It is useful to keep the b-pawn safe before improving the position further with ♞e2 or ♘c2. A possible continuation is:



21...e3 22.♖d3 f4 23.g3±



### 18.♖c1!N

Due to some specific details, the plan of ♖h1 and f2-f3 does not work as well here. Instead I want to use the queen to defend b2 in the short term, then transfer it towards the kingside at some point in the future. You may also note that we are sacrificing the d5-pawn (although please remember that we are already a pawn up!). Capturing this pawn will cost Black time and, more importantly, White's bishop and knight will be reborn: the bishop will be great on b3, and the knight will go via the newly vacated c2-square and on to e3 or d4.

The immediate 18.♖c4 runs into 18...♗c5! 19.♗e2 ♖fc8 and it's hard to find good squares for the knight.

I don't really like the idea of 18.♘b3 while the pawn stands on d5, as the bishop just seems to be stuck. The position after 18...a5! 19.♖b1 ♗c5 could be analysed further, but I much prefer the main line.

18.♖b1 has been played, but it is rather passive. 18...♗c5 Now ...♖xd5 is a real threat. 19.♗h5!N (White has tried 19.♘b3 and 19.c4 in the few existing games, but I don't

want to sacrifice piece activity for material; I also considered 19.♖h1? ♖xd5 20.g4! ♖f6 21.gxf5 ♖h8 22.♗e2 d5 when the position is unclear) 19...♗xd5 20.f3 ♗e6 21.g4! White may be able to force some kind of endgame with an extra pawn after gxf5, but all this seems unnecessary.

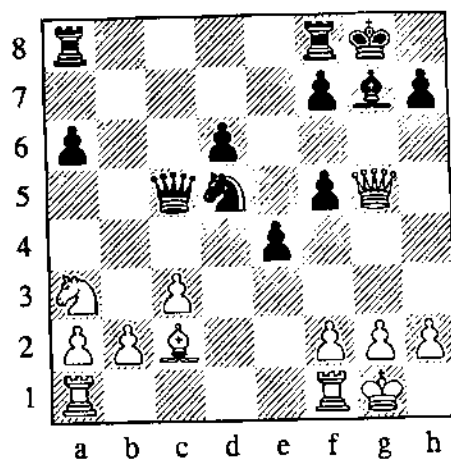
### 18...♖xd5

This is the obvious continuation. I also briefly considered:

18...♗c5 19.♗g5

19.♖d1! is also interesting; Black will probably play ...♖xd5 in the next few moves, when the position will resemble our main line after 18...♖xd5.

19...♖xd5



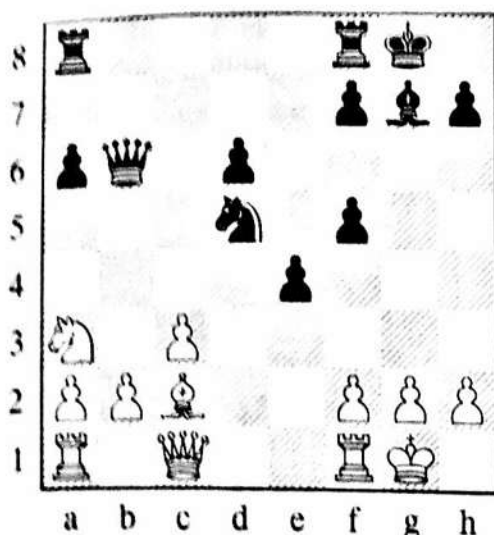
### 20.♘b3!?

This is the most ambitious plan.

20.♗xf5 is a simple solution. 20...♖xc3 21.♗xc5 ♖e2† 22.♖h1 dxc5 23.♖a1 ♘xb2 24.♖c4 ♖d4 25.♘xe4 ♖ab8 26.♖e3±

A subsequent ♖h3 will most probably win the h7-pawn, while Black's c-pawn and counterplay are well under control for now. 20...♖c7 21.♖c2 ♖e6 22.♗h4±

Black appears to be solid, but White is ready to finish regrouping his pieces with ♖ad1 and ♖e3, with excellent control in the centre. Moreover, the weakness of the f5-pawn will soon become apparent.



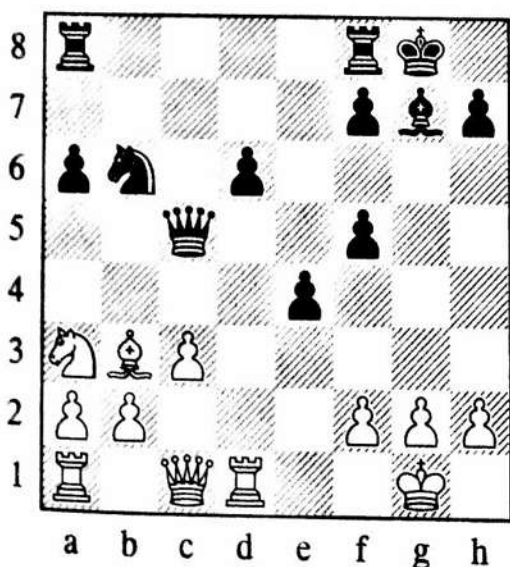
19. ♖b3 ♖c5

19...♖c7?! 20. ♖c4 ♖c5 21. ♖f4 is highly unpleasant for Black.

19...♖c7 is met by 20. ♖g5 ♖c7 21. ♖c4 followed by ♖e3. White's pieces all become active, and the f5-pawn starts to feel the strain.

20. ♖d1 ♖b6

20...♖c7 gives White more than one attractive option: 21. ♖e3!? (21. ♖c4 d5 22. ♖e3±) 21...♖xe3 (21...♖fd8 22. ♖c4 ♖xe3 23. ♖xe3 f4 is also excellent for White after 24. ♖f5 or 24. ♖d5) 22. fxe3 ♖fd8 23. ♖f1!±



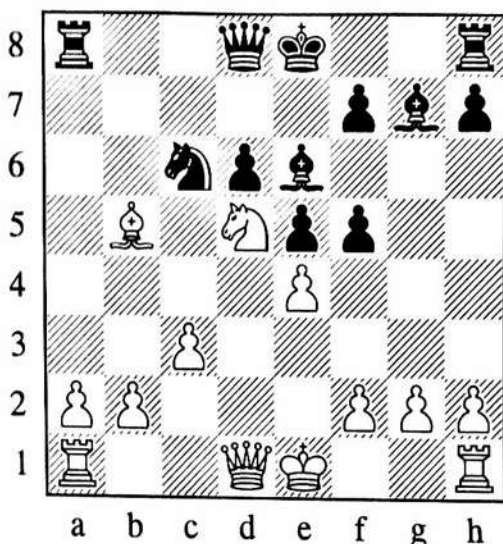
21. ♖c2

White stays in control while regrouping the pieces to better squares.

21...a5 22. a4 ♖ab8 23. g3 ♖e5 24. ♖d4 ♖fc8 25. ♖c3±

White has successfully transformed his extra pawn into a solid positional advantage.

B) 13...axb5 14. ♖xb5



Capturing the piece on b5 is the main line of course. Most players automatically continue with 14...♖d7, which will be analysed in detail in the final two chapters. In the remainder of the chapter we will cover an interesting sideline.

14...♖c8!?

This move was largely ignored for a long time, but due to some correspondence games (and especially the idea of 17...e4! as featured below) it seems to have a new life. The main idea is to lure White's queen to a4, far away from its ideal home on g4.

15. ♖a4

I briefly considered 15. ♖b4 ♖d7 16. ♖xd6 ♖xb4 17. ♖xb4 ♖xb5 18. ♖xb5† ♖d7 19. ♖xd7† ♖xd7 20. exf5 as in Petrukhin – Bocharov, Novosibirsk 2009. White has four pawns against a bishop, but after 20...♖c6N Black is not worse, as his king is active and the pawns are a long way back.



**15...♗d7**

15...0-0! is an admirable idea, but Black doesn't get quite enough compensation after:  
 16.♗xc6 fxe4



17.0-0-0! (17.0-0 would give Black some initiative) 17...♗h8 18.♗b1 f5 19.♗b4 ♖b6 20.f3± Almasi – Sutovsky, Paks 2005.

**16.exf5 0-0**

This is by far the most sensible move.

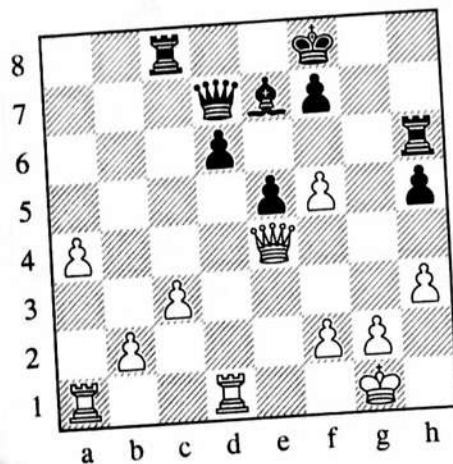
**16...h5!?**

This inventive scheme involving ...♗h6 and ...♗f8 has been played in a lot of correspondence games, but I find it deeply suspicious and I struggle to see the advantage of developing this way compared with normal castling.

17.0-0 ♗h6 18.♗fd1 ♗f8 19.h3

I'm not entirely sure why this move is necessary, but the position works out well for White regardless.

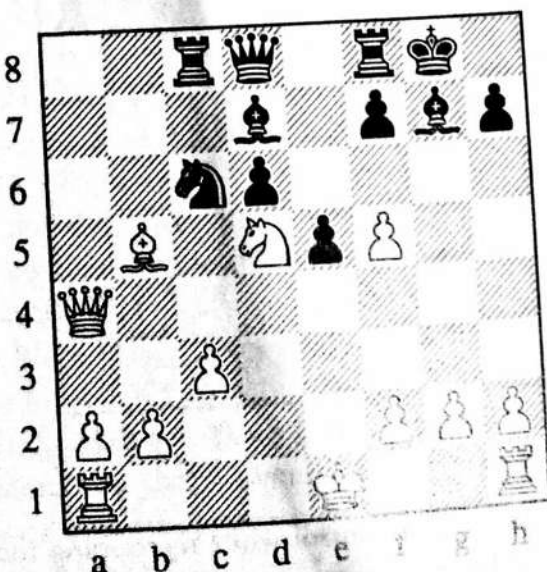
19...♗f6 20.♖e4 ♗c7 21.♗xe7 ♗xe7 22.♗xd7 ♖xd7 23.a4

**23...♗f6**

23...♗c6 is probably a better move, but 24.♖xc6 ♗xc6 25.a5± reaches a one-sided endgame. So far Black has managed to hold it at correspondence level, but in a practical game it would be unpleasant.

24.a5! ♖xf5 25.♖b7 d5 26.a6 ♗c5 27.a7 ♗xf2+ 28.♗h1 ♗xa7 29.♖xa7±

This was Krivic – Chiru, corr. 2009 – an excellent example of White's play. Material is now equal, but Black's king is slightly exposed and his pawns are weak, so he faces a long and tough defence.



17.0-0

This might look like an automatic choice, but things are not so simple; White has two tempting queen moves, but neither one quite works the way I would like.

17.♖e4?

This would have been ideal, as the d5-e4-f5 blockade has the potential to completely stifle Black's activity. Unfortunately, going for it prematurely allows Black to unblock the d5-square under favourable circumstances.

17...♞e8! 18.0-0

18.♔d3 is met by the annoying 18...♞d4! intending ...♞f5.

18.a4 ♞e7 19.♔xd7 ♞xd7 20.♞b6 ♞c6 21.♞xc6 ♞xc6 22.a5 d5! (22...♞xf5 23.♞e2♞ could slowly become unpleasant for Black) 23.0-0 e4 It is hard for White to improve on the queenside.

18...♞e7!N

18...♞b8 19.♔d3!?N is not so clear.



19.♔xd7 ♞xd7 20.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 21.♞fd1 ♞ed8

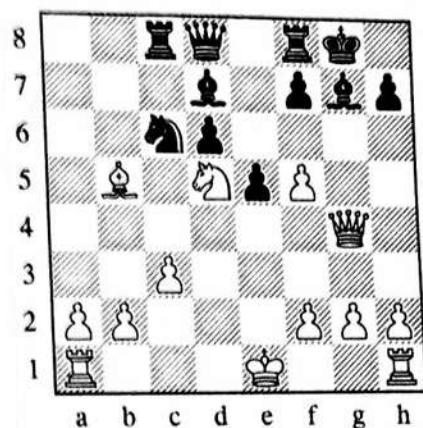
Such a position would be good for White if only we could have somehow forced Black to play ...f6 along the way. As things stand, it is not so easy to advance the queenside pawns, for instance:

22.a4 ♞b8 23.b4 d5 24.♞xd5 ♞xd5 25.♞xd5 e4!

Black gets more than enough counterplay.

If White wishes to deviate from the main line, a better possibility is:

17.♞g4!?N

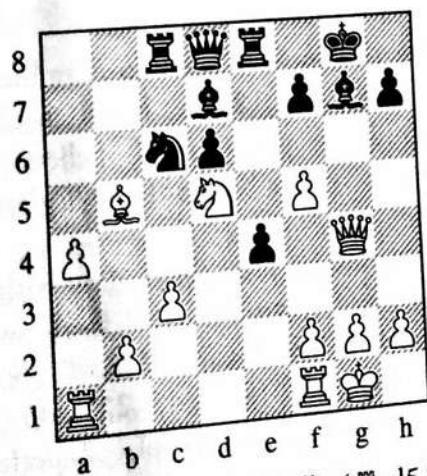


It would be tempting to try this in a practical game, as it sets a subtle positional trap.

17...e4!

The tricky point of White's last move is that 17...♞h8?! 18.♞e4! gives White an improved version of the previous note. 18...♞e8 19.0-0 White threatens f5-f6 followed by ♔d3, and ...♞e7 isn't possible due to ♔xd7 and f5-f6, the crucial point being that fxg7 will come with check! Therefore Black has nothing better than 19...♞g8 20.♔d3 f6. The last move is a concession that reduces Black's potential for counterplay with a future ...e4, and White will have excellent chances once the pawns start rolling.

18.a4 ♞e8 19.0-0

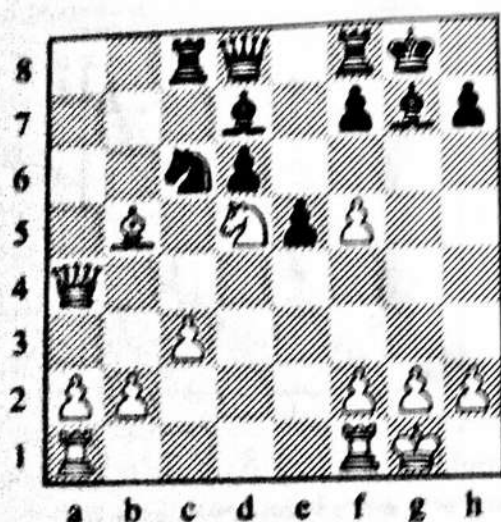


19...♞xf5! 20.♞xf5 ♞e5 21.♞g4 ♞xd5 22.♞xe4



$\text{Re5}$  23.  $\text{Bf3}$   $\text{Re5}$  =

Black intends ... $\text{Qe5}$  and seems to be doing just fine.



17... $\text{e4}$ !

This is the key idea from the correspondence world which has revitalized 14... $\text{Re8}$ .

17... $\text{Re8}$  is met by 18.  $\text{Rfe1}$  and, with ... $\text{e4}$  not working, Black has no way to untangle and get counterplay.

17... $\text{Qh8}$  18.  $\text{Bxe4}$   $\text{Rg8}$  is how this line used to be played, but such positions don't promise Black any counterplay. After 19.  $\text{a4}$   $\text{Qh6}$  20.  $\text{g3}$   $\text{Rb8}$  21.  $\text{b4}$   $\text{Rg5}$  22.  $\text{Qe3}$  the play was completely one-sided in Cheparinov - Halkias, Antalya 2004.

After the text move I want to examine two continuations. B1) 18.  $\text{Rfe1}$  has been almost unanimously played, but I believe B2) 18.  $\text{Bxe4}$ ! may have been unfairly neglected.

18.  $\text{Rad1}$  would be ideal for dealing with the threat of ... $\text{Qe5}$ , but 18... $\text{Re8}$ ! is annoying. (Instead after 18... $\text{Qe5}$ ! 19.  $\text{Qxd7}$   $\text{Qxd7}$  20.  $\text{Bxe4}$   $\text{Qf6}$  21.  $\text{Bf4}$   $\text{Qxd5}$  22.  $\text{Rxd5}$   $\text{Qe5}$  23.  $\text{Bd2}$  White's pieces are placed perfectly to restrict Black's play and continue with the queenside expansion.) 19.  $\text{Rfe1}$   $\text{Ra8}$

20.  $\text{Bc2}$   $\text{Qb4}$ ? 21.  $\text{Qxb4}$   $\text{Qxb5}$  22.  $\text{Rxe4}$   $\text{Bg5}$  Black's bishops ensure him of excellent play.

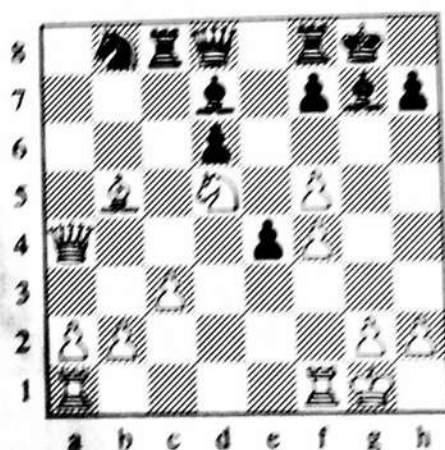
18.  $\text{f4}$ ?

This is a fancy try, but unfortunately Black has an elegant way to deal with it.

18... $\text{Qb8}$ !

18... $\text{Qh8}$  19.  $\text{Bxe4}$  is bad for Black, and 18... $\text{Re8}$  19.  $\text{Rae1}$  does not seem to help him a great deal.

18... $\text{exf3}$  would be interesting to analyse further but, since Black has a more convincing solution available, I won't go into much detail. 19.  $\text{Bf4}$ ! is an interesting move, with the idea: 19... $\text{fxg2}$  20.  $\text{f6}$   $\text{gxf1}$  =  $\text{Bg1}$  21.  $\text{Rxf1}$   $\text{Qh8}$  22.  $\text{fxg7}$   $\text{Qxg7}$  23.  $\text{Qf6}$ .



19.  $\text{f6}$

19.  $\text{Qxd7}$   $\text{Qxd7}$  followed by ... $\text{Qf6}$  is good for Black.

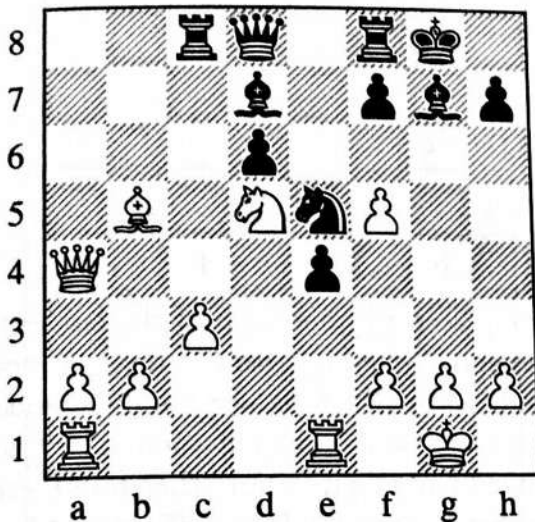
The text move is an artificial attempt to delay the knight's arrival on f6, but it does not change the overall evaluation of the position.

19... $\text{Qxb5}$  20.  $\text{Bxb5}$   $\text{Qxf6}$  21.  $\text{Bxa4}$   $\text{Qg7}$  22.  $\text{Bxe4}$   $\text{Re8}$  23.  $\text{Bf3}$   $\text{Qd7}$ .

Finally, I briefly considered 18.  $\text{f3}$ , after noting that the above note with ... $\text{exf3}$  showed some promise for White. However, there is a better reply in 18... $\text{Qh8}$ ! (18... $\text{Qe5}$  19.  $\text{fxe4}$   $\text{Qxb5}$  20.  $\text{Bxb5}$  looks somewhat worrying for Black) 19.  $\text{fxe4}$   $\text{Qe5}$ ! when I would be worried about Black's initiative on the kingside.

**B1) 18.♖fe1 ♘e5!**

After 18...♖e8? 19.♖xe4± Black fails to untangle his pieces. The text move is better, and forces a series of exchanges.

**19.♙xd7**

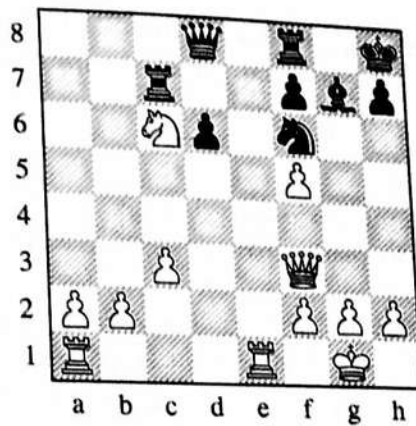
19.f6 ♙xb5 20.♖xb5 ♙xf6 21.♖xe4 (21.b4 ♙g7 22.a4 f5 23.a5 f4 is not to my liking) 21...♙g7 Black was ready to launch his counterplay with ...f5 in Svacek – Scherer, corr. 2010. I don't think we can realistically hope for any advantage here, despite the excellent knight on d5.

**19...♙xd7 20.♖xe4 ♙f6**

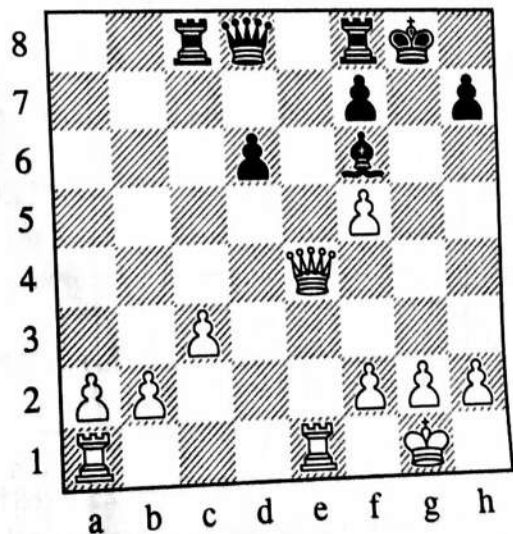
This is the point of Black's pawn sacrifice: all these exchanges make his life a lot easier.

**21.♙xf6†**

21.♙e7† seems to be a drawing path, for instance: 21...♙h8 22.♖f3 ♖c7 23.♙c6 (23.♙d5!? is quite similar to 21.♙xf6†; I don't know if we might find a slight improvement for White here but, after 23...♙xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖c5! 25.♖d3 d5, intending ...d4 – a thematic idea that you will see later – Black seems to be doing fine.)



23...♖a8 24.♙d4 ♖xf3 25.♙xf3 ♖b8 26.♖e2 ♖cb7 27.a4 ♖xb2 28.♖xb2 ♖xb2 29.a5 ♖b8 30.a6 ♖a8 31.a7 ♙e4 32.♖a4 d5 33.♙d4 ♙xd4 34.cxd4 ♙d6 35.g4 ♙c8 36.♖a5 ♖xa7 37.♖xd5 Two correspondence games were drawn like this.

**21...♙xf6**

When I first looked at this position, I thought it should be better for White without any risk. However, the pesky correspondence players have shown that Black can do a good job of holding up the queenside pawns with active moves. One of the most important resources is the ...d5-d4 sacrifice, which erodes White's pawn structure and enables Black's pieces to become much more active, while it should be easy enough to recover the d4-pawn. Of course the position still deserves attention, and I am



not completely convinced that Black's life will be easy in a practical game, but it's certainly hard to prove a theoretical advantage.

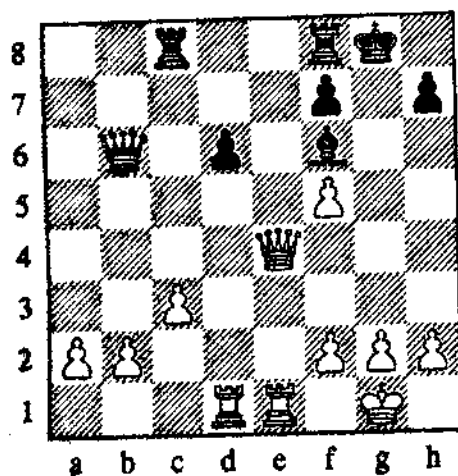
### 22. ♖e1! ♞N

22.a4 is an obvious try, but 22...d5! prepares Black's thematic pawn sacrifice. (Instead 22...♞b6 23.♞e2 ♞fe8 24.♞xe8† ♞xe8 25.♞xe8† ♞g7 26.♞e2± would be pleasantly one-sided) 23.♞g4† ♞h8 24.♞e1 d4!= Followed by ...♞d5, and Black should be fine.

### 22. ♞ad1

This is the obvious way to prevent ...d5. If White can consolidate and start pushing the queenside pawns he will be clearly better but Black can do just enough to obstruct that plan.

### 22... ♞b6



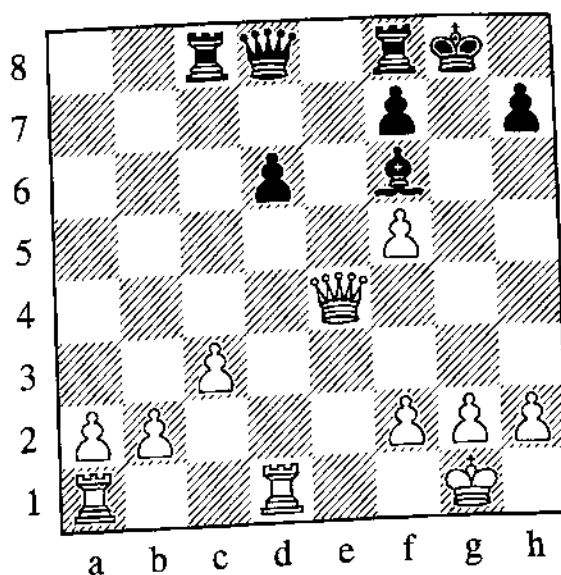
### 23. ♞g4†

After 23.♞e2 ♞fe8 24.♞xe8† ♞xe8 25.♞xe8† ♞g7= the two rooks are nothing special, since we can't really push the pawns.

23.♞c2 ♞fe8 24.♞xe8† ♞xe8 25.a4 d5 is also equal, as Black is ready to play ...d4.

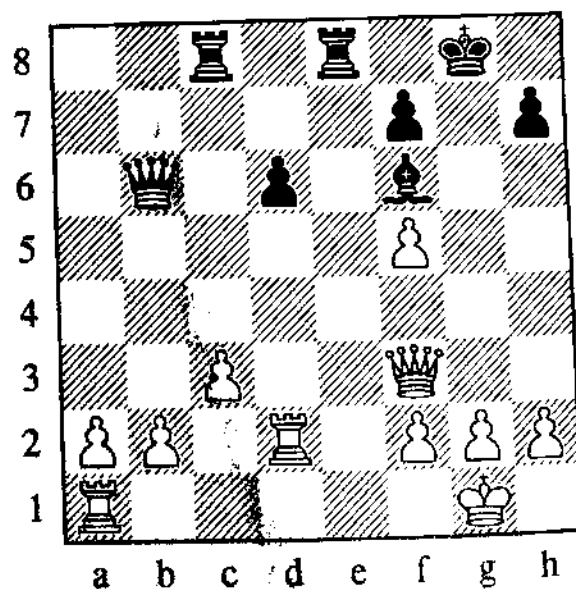
### 23... ♞h8 24. ♞d2 ♞fe8 25. ♞xe8† ♞xe8 26. ♞d1

The players agreed a draw in Evtushenko – Degtyarev, corr. 2011, as White cannot effectively push the pawns.



Having seen the outcome of the last game quoted above, the logic behind the text move should be clear. The rook was not doing much on the e-file, and it would soon have been exchanged had it stayed put. Therefore I want to use that rook to hold up ...d5-d4 and keep the other rook behind the a-pawn.

### 22... ♞b6 23. ♞d2 ♞fe8 24. ♞f3



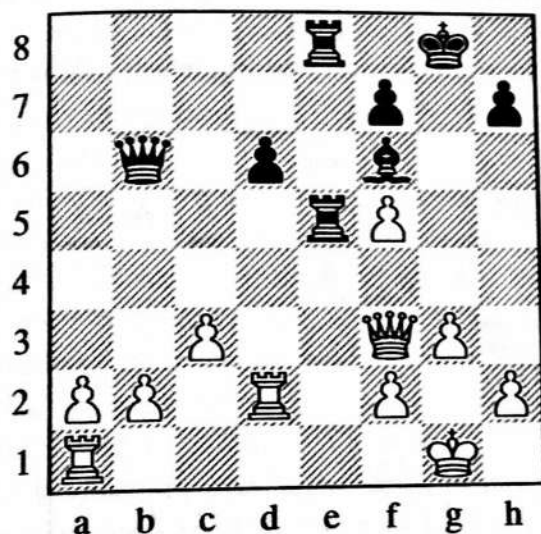
### 24... ♞e5

After 24...d5 25.g3 it is not so obvious if Black should proceed with ...d4. He will not be able to blockade on d5, and if he captures on d4 with the bishop then ...d5 will force him into a more passive position than he would like.

25.g3 ♖ce8!

It is useful for Black to have the option of ...♞e1†, especially if White advances the a-pawn.

25...♞c5?! is not so good: 26.a4! ♞xf5 27.♞g4† ♔h8 28.a5± Black has spent a lot of time going after a less-than-vital pawn, while the a-pawn has been gaining ground.



26.♞f1

26.♞ad1 ♞e1† 27.♔g2 ♞a6 is a bit annoying; White can defend against mate easily enough, but he can hardly hope for an advantage.

26...♞c5!∞

26...♞e1 allows 27.b3! when White is ready to block any counterplay with c3-c4, followed by slowly improving his position. The text move is better though: Black stops our plan and attacks the f5-pawn. In short, although we have several ways of handling this line, I found no clear route to an advantage in any of them.

B2) 18.♞xe4!?



When you realize that this forces Black to play ...♞e5xf5, it's natural to give it more attention since the rook looks rather odd on f5.

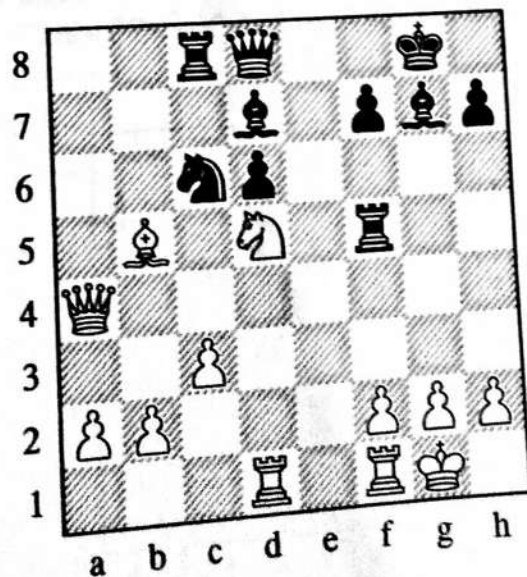
18...♞e8 19.♞a4

Unfortunately there is no better square for the queen.

19...♞e5

The only way – Black has to eliminate the f5-pawn since it completely restricts him.

20.♞ad1 ♞xf5





**21. ♖f1**

21.f4 is the more natural move, as it restricts Black's rook and keeps additional options with the rook on f1. Unfortunately it allows 21... ♗d4! 22. ♖xd4 ♗xd4 23. ♗xd7 ♗e2† 24. ♗f2 ♖xd5 25. ♗xc8 ♖b6†! 26. ♗f3 ♗g1† when Black has a strong initiative, although White managed to hold on for a draw in Nordin – Vermeulen, corr. 2014.

**21... ♗h8**

21... ♗a8 22. ♖c4 ♖c8 (22... ♗e5 23. ♖e4 ♗d3† 24. ♗d3 ♖g5† 25. ♗h1 ♗xb5 26. f4 ♖h5 27. ♗e7† ♗h8 28. c4! with the idea of ♖xd6, and Black is struggling to keep things together) 23.f4 doesn't change much compared to the main lines. 23... ♗e5 24. ♖a4 ♗xb5 25. ♖xb5 ♗g6 26. a4

**21... ♖e5**

This is the most natural move, but I am not convinced that it equalizes.

**22. ♖e5**

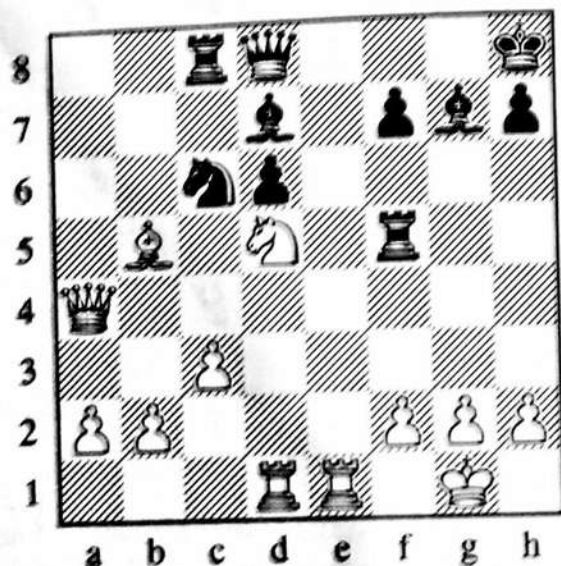
22.f4? also deserves attention: 22... ♖e6 (22... ♖h5 obviously just loses time; 22... ♖e1† 23. ♖e1 also seems pretty good for White) Black's rook on e6 seems decently placed, but after 23. ♖a6! it is not quite clear how he should continue. In the event of 23... ♗h8 24. ♖b7 Black is rather stuck, as 24... ♗xb5? 25. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 26. ♗e7† wins.

22... ♗e5 23. ♗xd7 ♗xd7

**24. ♖c2**

24. ♗e3 ♖a8 is irritating because of the a2-pawn.

The text move avoids ... ♖a8 ideas. The computer maintains that Black is okay, but I feel White has better chances, especially in a practical game. White is ready to bring the knight to an aggressive position with ♗e3-f5, and he can continue playing little moves like h2-h3 to continue improving. I don't see an obvious source of counterplay for Black so I can't imagine White is taking much risk here.

**22.f4!**

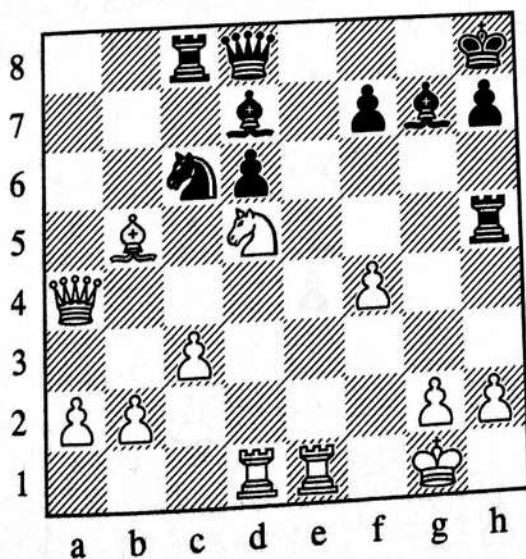
Unlike the earlier note with 21.f4, Black does not have the ... ♗d4† resource available here, so it is worth taking control over the e5-square to prevent ... ♖e5 or ... ♗e5. It's interesting to see that the computer seems to think that Black can do nothing and still be okay – you can see suggestions like ... ♗f6, ... ♗f8, and back with ... ♗g7 in many cases, but I think the machine underestimates the extent to which White can keep improving his position: there are many small strengthening moves such as g2-g3 (or h2-h3), a2-a3 (to reduce the impact of a future ... ♖a8), ♖e3 and so on. Moreover, after appropriate preparation White can think about moving his queen and advancing the a- and b-pawns. With this in mind, I don't think Black can just keep waiting

indefinitely, especially in a practical game. Of course it's not easy for White either – he must be patient, slowly improving his position and consolidating, while being ready to pounce on any inaccuracy from his opponent.

### 22...♖h5

22...♖a8 doesn't help Black at all. 23.♞e4 ♖h5 24.♞e2 ♖h6 25.a4 This is precisely the kind of line that I think the computer underestimates. It maintains that the position is 0.00, but things have already started to turn slightly less pleasant for Black. 25...♞c8 26.h3 ♞e6 27.♞f2±

The text move is more purposeful, as Black intends ...♞h4. By the way, Kotronias suggests that Black has adequate counterplay here; it is quite impressive that he got as far as this position, considering that 14...♞c8 is not even his main recommendation, and is only mentioned in a note. White can deal with the kingside threats fairly easily, although he faces an important decision as to whether to advance the g- or the h-pawn.



### 23.h3

Although the two moves are quite similar, I prefer this option slightly as it is less weakening. Moreover, if Black follows up with ...♜b8, there is one concrete line where White benefits from having the pawn on h3 instead of g3. The

downside is that we still have to watch out for ...♞h4, but this should not be a big problem.

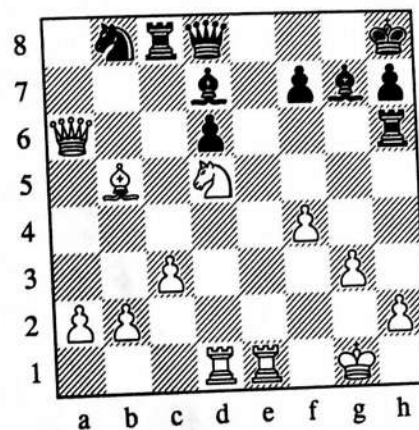
I will include some analysis of 23.g3 as well; Black's two main options are a) 23...♖h6 and b) 23...♜b8.

### a) 23...♖h6 24.♞a6!?

24.♞e2 ♞e6 25.♞de1 ♜b8 could be checked further, but I would prefer to have my pawn on h3 here.

### 24...♜b8

24...♞e6 25.a4! leaves Black rather stuck. 25...♖a8 26.♞b6±



### 25.♞b7!

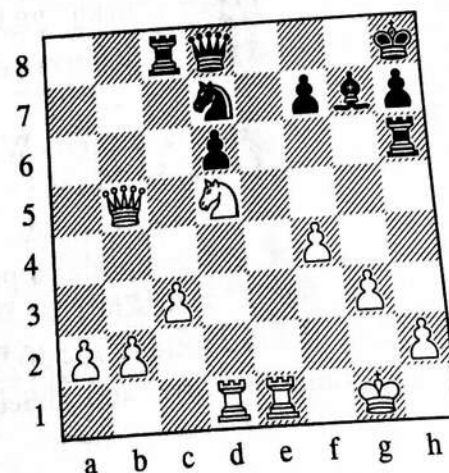
Forcing Black to take on b5 – something he would usually prefer to avoid.

### 25...♜xb5 26.♞xb5

With ♞e7 coming, Black must play accurately to survive.

### 26...♜d7

26...♞e6?! 27.♞xe6 fxe6 28.♜b6±





27.  $\text{Ee7}$   $\text{Qf6}$

The only move.

28.  $\text{Ede1}$

I will cut the analysis here; Black seems to be able to survive with some precise computer play, but in a practical game this would be a dangerous line for him.

b) 23...  $\text{Qb8}$

This is a typical idea in these positions.

24.  $\text{Qxd7}$

White would be happy to allow ...  $\text{Qxb5}$ , since  $\text{Qxb5}$  followed by  $\text{Ee7}$  would be good for him. The problem with leaving the bishop is that Black could instead play ...  $\text{Qe6}$  followed by ...  $\text{Qd7}$ , when he achieves a certain degree of harmony.

24...  $\text{Qxd7}$

24...  $\text{Qxd7}$ ? 25.  $\text{Qxd7}$   $\text{Qxd7}$  26.  $\text{Ee7}$ ±



25.  $\text{Qa6}$

25.  $\text{Qb4}$   $\text{Eb8}$ ! is an annoying option which only works because g2-g3 has been played.

26.  $\text{Qxd6}$   $\text{Exb2}$  27.  $\text{Ee7}$   $\text{Ehxh2}$  28.  $\text{Qxd7}$   $\text{Ebg2}$ † 29.  $\text{Qf1}$   $\text{Eg2}$ † and Black forces a draw.

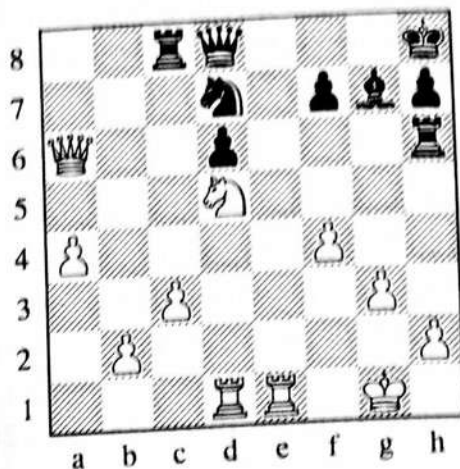
25...  $\text{Eh6}$

25...  $\text{Qc5}$  26.  $\text{Qe2}$  is pleasant for White, while 25...  $\text{Qf8}$  can be met by 26.  $\text{a3}$ !?

26.  $\text{a4}$

I wondered about giving up the a-pawn with 26.  $\text{Qe7}$ !?  $\text{Ea8}$  27.  $\text{Qc6}$   $\text{Qf8}$  (27...  $\text{Exa2}$  28.  $\text{Qf5}$   $\text{Eg6}$  29.  $\text{Qd4}$   $\text{Exa2}$  30.  $\text{Ee2}$ . White has some initiative and practical

chances, but objectively I don't think it's anything special.



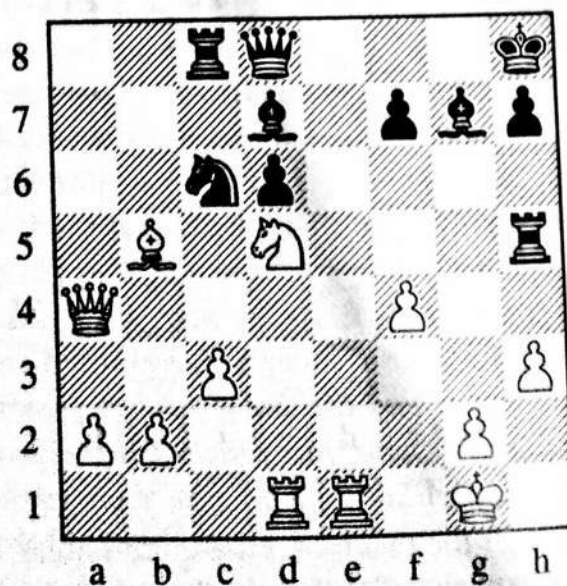
26...  $\text{Ea8}$  27.  $\text{Qc4}$   $\text{Ee8}$ !

After 27...  $\text{Qb6}$ ? 28.  $\text{Qc7}$ !  $\text{Qxd5}$  29.  $\text{Qxd8}$ †  $\text{Exd8}$  30.  $\text{Exd5}$ ± Black's counterplay is completely blocked, while the pawns are free to advance.

28.  $\text{Qa6}$ =

28.  $\text{Qa2}$  allows the slightly annoying 28...  $\text{Qa5}$ ! followed by ...  $\text{Qa7}$ †, so White should probably take the repetition.

Let's return to my main suggestion of 23.  $\text{h3}$  to see how White can benefit from the slight change to his king's shelter.



23...  $\text{Qb8}$

We have already seen that this is a typical device. It is playable here too, although the

bishop exchange at least eases any worries we might have about sacrificial ideas on h3.

23...♙h6 doesn't create any ideas – the computer just thinks Black can wait by playing back and forth. 24.♖e2 (24.♖e4!?) 24...♙g7 One natural plan is 25.♗e4 with the idea of ♗f3 and a2-a4, continuing to improve the position and add pressure. White could even delay it further with 25.a3!?, just ensuring that the a-pawn will never hang on a2. Then after 25...♙h6 we can proceed with 26.♗e4.

23...♖h6 24.♖e2 ♖e6 is a logical way to improve the rook, after which 25.♗de1 reaches something of a standoff: if Black exchanges on e2 then White's play becomes extremely easy, while taking on e6 would obviously not be a good idea for White. So once again, we should look for small improving move. Here are a few possible lines:



25...♙b8 (25...♖xe2 26.♖xe2±) 26.♙h2 ♖c5 (26...♙xb5? 27.♗xb5 ♖c5 28.♗d3±) 27.♙xd7 ♙xd7 28.c4 ♖xe2 29.♖xe2 ♖c8 30.b3 ♙f6 31.♙e7 Intending ♙f5. The outcome is still not clear, but you can see there are plenty of ideas to improve White's position.

23...♗h4

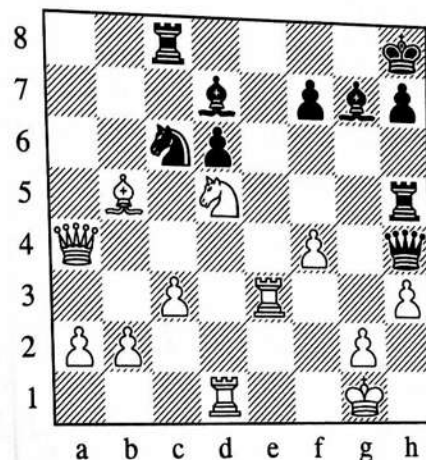
Going after the king is a natural idea, especially when you realize that grabbing material on the queenside is not the best

idea for White. However, we can neutralize Black's attack with:

24.♖e3!

24.♙b6?? ♙xh3! 25.♙xc6 ♖g8! would be disastrous for White.

24.♙xc6?! ♙xc6 25.♗a6 ♖g8! 26.♗xc6 ♗g3 also gives Black a dangerous attack.



24...♙h6

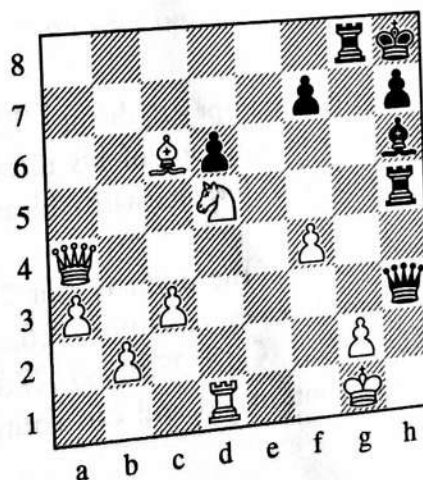
24...♗d8 is playable, but it is also an admission that Black's attack has failed. One possible plan is 25.♙h1 ♖h6 26.♗e4 ♖e6 27.♗d3 intending a2-a4.

25.a3! ♖g8

25...♙g7? loses material after 26.♙xc6 ♙xc6 27.♗a6.

Black can retreat his queen to d8 of course, when White continues improving his position with the ideas already discussed.

26.♙xc6 ♙xh3 27.♖xh3 ♗xh3



28.♗d4! ♖e5!



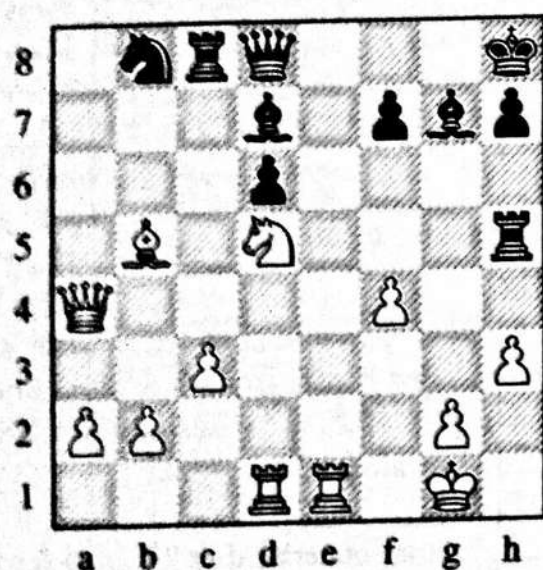
28...♗g7 29.gxh3 ♔xd4† 30.♕h2 gives White great winning chances in the endgame.

29.♖f6 ♗g6 30.♖d7

30...♗xe5! is a nice tactic, but after 30...dxe5 31.♗d8† ♕g7 32.♗g8† ♕xf6 33.♗xg6† ♕xg6 34.gxh3 ♔xf4= White's extra pawn is insignificant.

30...♗e3† 31.♗xe3 ♗xe3 32.f5

The game goes on, but White is the favourite in the endgame with two connected passed pawns for the exchange.



24.♔xd7 ♖xd7

Once again we have an interesting strategic fight. We can't hope to analyse it to the end, but I will suggest a few moves to show how the game might go on.

25.♗b4?

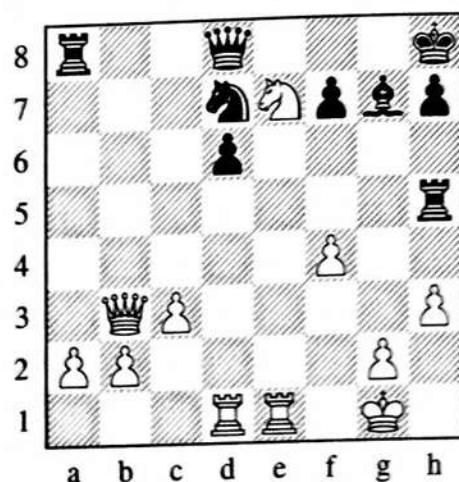
An interesting attempt to disrupt Black's coordination by forcing one of his pieces to move to defend d6. A few alternative ideas are:

25.♗a6 ♗h6 26.a3! (The point is that 26.a4 ♗a8! seems to force a repetition) 26...♗a8 (26...♖c5? 27.♗a7 ♖d7 28.♗e7†) 27.♗d3 White is well coordinated and can continue with ♖e3-f5.

White might also try the immediate knight switch to f5:

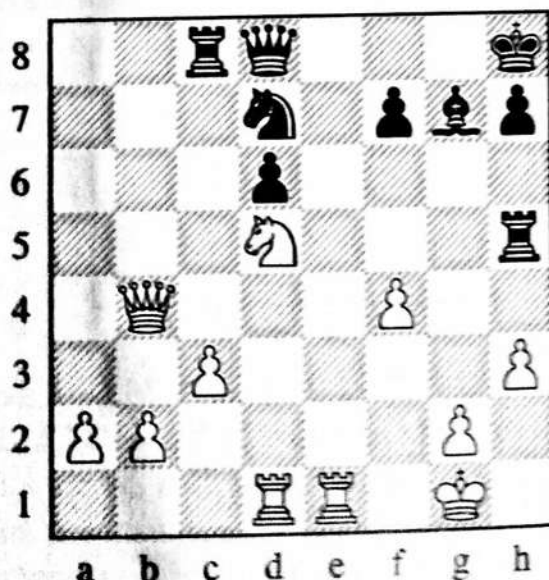
25.♖e7!? ♗a8 26.♗b3!?

26.♗e4 ♗b6† (26...♗xa2 27.♗b7! ♖c5 28.♗f3 ♗h6 29.♗d5 followed by ♖f5 looks unpleasant for Black) 27.♕h2 ♗ha5! Getting the rook out of the danger zone. It's still a messy position but Black seems to be okay.



26...♗b6† 27.♕h1 ♗xb3 28.axb3

It is still not so easy for Black to equalize. His pieces are uncoordinated and the d6-pawn might soon fall as well.



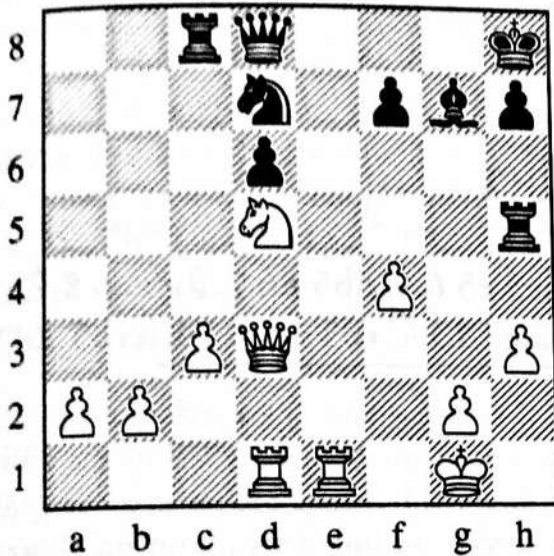
25...♗f8

25...♗h6 26.♖e7! looks awkward for Black since 26...♗b8? loses to 27.♖c6.

25...♖c5 26.♗e2 ♗b8 (26...♗h6 is met by 27.♖e7 intending ♖f5) 27.♗d4 Once again

there is no clear route to equality for Black, and White continues to improve his position bit by bit.

26. ♖d4† ♕g7 27. ♖d3



White has succeeded in improving his queen. It can go to f3 if attacked, and it no longer obstructs the queenside pawns.

## Conclusion

Black's most popular and principled reply to 10. ♖d5 is 10...f5, when I have chosen to recommend 11. ♕d3 ♕e6 12. c3 ♕g7 13. ♖xb5, which usually entails giving up a piece for three pawns plus the initiative.

Black can decline the offer with 13...♕xd5 14. exd5 ♖e7 15. ♖a3, hoping to get some initiative for his lost pawn. However, White has good chances to play against the f5-e4 pawn wedge, either by preparing f2-f3 or by giving back the d5-pawn in order to achieve full piece coordination.

The normal continuation is of course 13...axb5 14. ♕xb5, when 14...♖c8!? is an interesting deviation from the usual paths of the next chapter. The critical line is 15. ♖a4 ♕d7 16. exf5 0-0 17. 0-0 e4!, when I believe 18. ♖xe4!? has been underrated. After exploring it in some detail, I think White has good chances to coordinate his pieces and gradually improve his position. With the exception of a few forcing lines, trying to memorize my analysis would be counterproductive – the sheer number of options for both players means that the main fight will take place over the board. Instead my aim has been to show a variety of ways in which you can improve the position and put pressure on your opponent.



1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxd4 d6  
 5.dxc3 c5 6.dxb5 d6 7.g5 a6 8.Qa3 b5  
 9.fxf6 gxf6 10.d5 f5 11.d3 e6 12.c3  
 g7 13.Qxb5 axb5 14.Qxb5 d7 15.cxf5

This critical position has been debated in practice for a long time. The main idea these days is definitely the plan with ...0-0 and ...e4 (or ...e4 and then ...0-0) – see the next chapter, as analysed in depth by Kotronias in his excellent Sveshnikov book. But first we must look at a couple of alternatives: A) 15...Bb8?! and B) 15...Qb8.

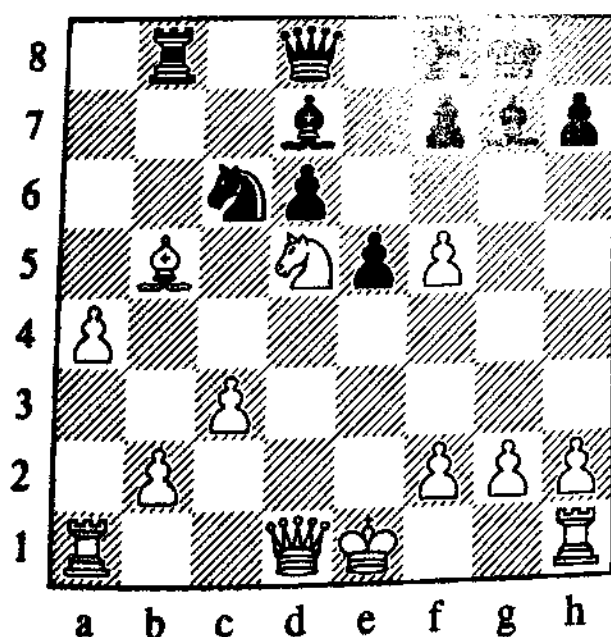
### A) 15...Bb8?!

This line makes very little sense as it doesn't solve any of Black's underlying problems – the king remains in the centre, his pieces remain mostly uncoordinated, and his threats are not effective. Still it has been played a considerable number of times, so we should analyse it:

### 16.e4

Now there are two options to consider: A1) 16...0-0 or A2) 16...Bg8.

### A1) 16...0-0



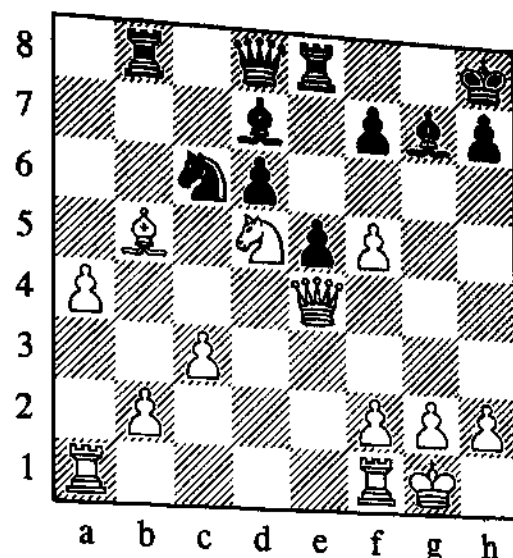
After this slow move Black will not be able to play a timely ...e4, and White will get a typical strong bind.

17.0-0 Be8 18.Bg4 Qh8

18...e4 is impossible due to: 19.Qxc6 Qxc6  
 20.f6+-

19.Qe4!

Threatening f5-f6.



19...f6

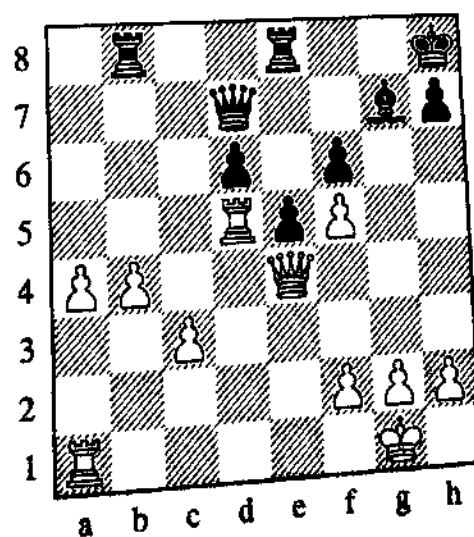
This is obviously a dream position for White. Black has no counterplay, and he is condemned to fight for a draw with only the smallest margin for error. White's play is quite logical – he can allow the exchanges of minor pieces after ...Qe7, keep blocking the ...d5 break, and continue to push the queenside pawns.

20.b4

I would also like to show an instructive game: 20.Bfd1 Qe7 21.Qxd7 Bxd7 22.b4

Or 22.Qxe7 Bxe7 23.b4.

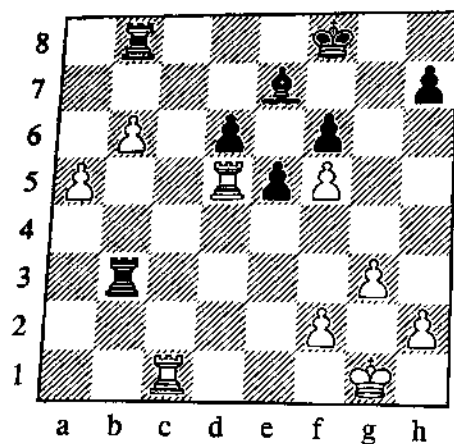
22...Qxd5 23.Bxd5



23...♖c8

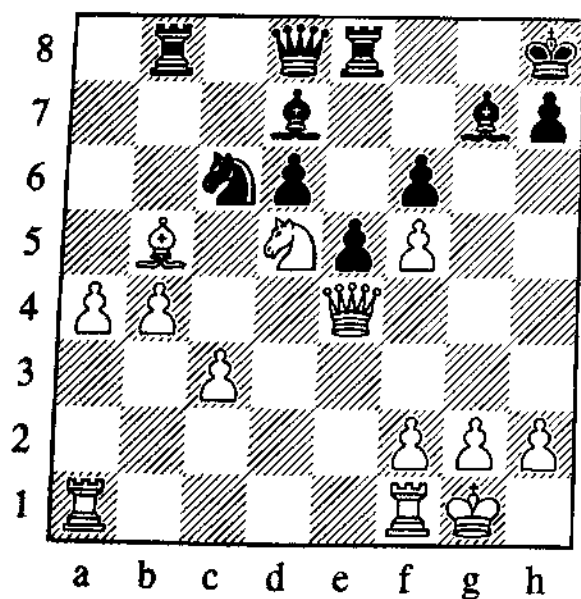
23...♖c6! is a better defence. 24.♖d3 e4 25.♖d4 e3 26.fxe3 ♖xe3 Black drew in a few correspondence games from here, but from a practical perspective, it is one-sided after something like 27.♖xe3 ♖xd5 28.a5 ♖xf5 29.a6 ♖a8.

24.♖d3 ♖f7 25.♖d1 ♖f8 26.a5 ♖c7 27.g3 ♖xc3 28.♖xc3 ♖xc3 29.b5 ♖e7 30.♖a1 ♖b3 31.b6 ♖g7 32.♖c1 ♖f8



33.g4! h6 34.h3 ♖e8 35.♖c7 ♖b4 36.♖a7±

Rather amazing, and a computer-like display of domination in Stoyanov – Gromotka, corr. 2012. This shows how hard it is for Black to survive by following such a passive defence.



20...♖e7 21.♖xd7 ♖xd7 22.♖xe7 ♖xe7 23.♖fd1

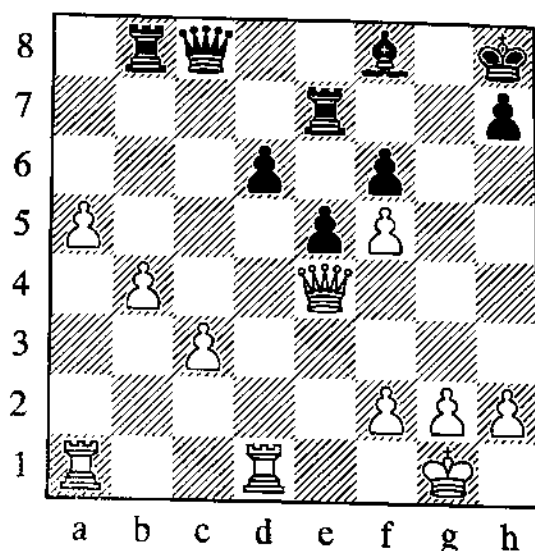
Keeping d5 under control. I don't know if Black can somehow defend this, but there is certainly no forcing way to hold this position; so Black continues to suffer.

23...♖f8

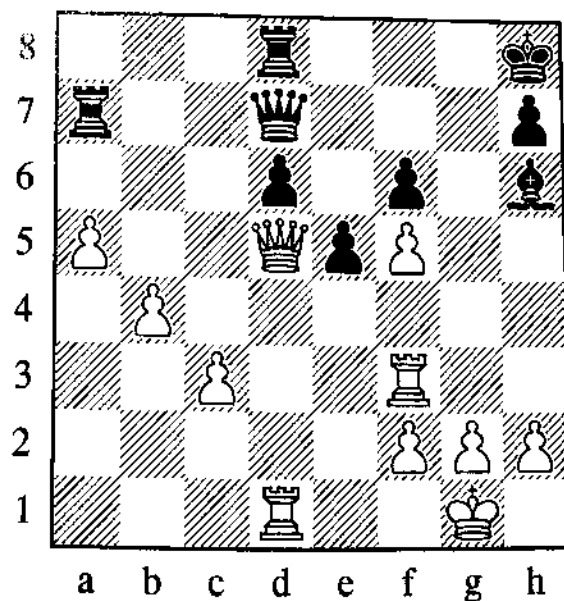
Or 23...♖c8 24.b5!N ♖xc3 25.b6 ♖a5 26.♖xd6 also seems unpleasant for Black.

Rogozenko suggests that 23...♖c7 is level, but we can simply play 24.b5! as above.

24.a5 ♖c8



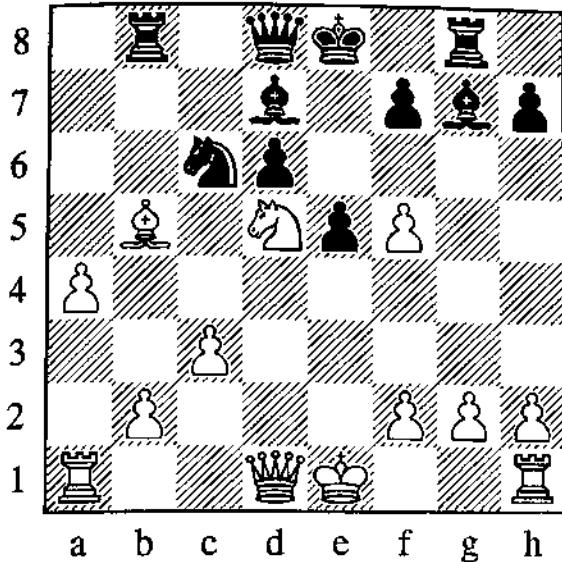
25.♖d5! ♖a7 26.♖d3 ♖d7 27.♖g3 ♖h6 28.♖d1 ♖d8 29.♖f3±





In a practical game, Black remains without any counterplay, while White has various ways to improve his position. It's much harder to break through in a correspondence game, so eventually this was drawn in Schoen – Tinture, email 2007.

### A2) 16...♖g8



This used to be played quite often, but it just seems like a shady line.

### 17.♗f3! ♘e7

17...f6 is of course ugly. 18.0–0 is a simple reply.

### 18.♘e3!

With the idea of f5-f6, causing serious problems for Black's coordination.

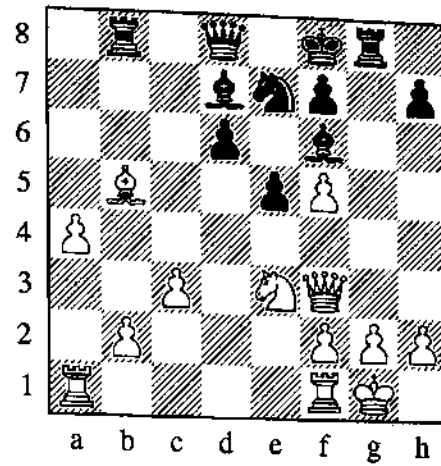
### 18...♙h6!?

18...♙xb5 19.axb5 ♙h6 (19...f6 20.c4) 20.f6±

### 18...♙f6 19.0–0 ♘f8

If 19...d5 then an excellent example was 20.♘g4! ♗b6 21.a5 ♗d6 22.♙xd7† ♘xd7 23.a6 h5 24.♘e3 e4 25.♗e2 ♗c6 26.a7+– as in Azarov – Krasenkow, Jurmala 2012.

19...♙g5 20.f6 ♘c8 21.♙xd7† ♗xd7 22.♘d5±



20.♙xd7 ♗xd7 21.a5

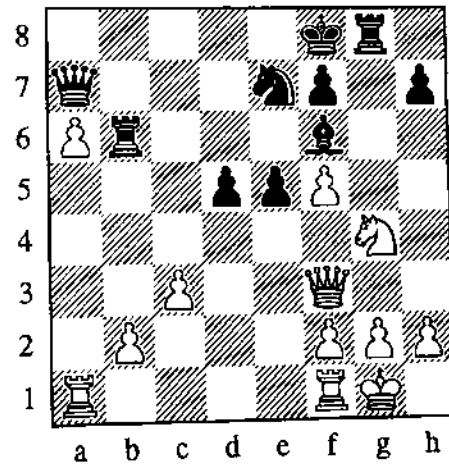
It's hard to deal with the blunt plan of pushing of the a-pawn.

21...d5

21...♙g5 22.f6 ♘c8 23.♘d5 ♗c6 24.♗fd1 ♗g6 25.b4 ♙xf6 26.♘f4 ♗xf3 27.♘xg6† hxg6 28.gxf3±

22.a6 ♗a7 23.♘g4 ♗b6

23...e4 24.♗h3 ♙g5 25.f6 ♘c6 (25...♘g6 26.g3±) 26.b4±



24.♘xf6 ♗xf6 25.♗e3 ♘c8

25...♗xe3 26.fxe3 ♘g7 27.b4±

26.♗xe5±

Once again it is a pretty one-sided game – the knight doesn't cause White any trouble at all, and White will have four pawns for it.

### 19.f6

19.♘g4 ♙g5 20.h4 h5!±

### 19...♘c8

19...♖g6 20.♗f5 ♕f8 21.g3 ♜xf6  
22.♗xd6†!±

### 20.♗d5

Despite Black's obviously weird piece coordination, it's actually not so easy for White to prove an advantage. But after a lot of attempts, the correspondence players eventually showed some precise ways to gain an advantage, so I don't expect this line to come into fashion for Black.

### 20...♗f8

20...♗xb5 21.axb5 ♜d7 22.g3!

Avoiding the queen exchange with ...♜g4; White also uses the open a-file very well.

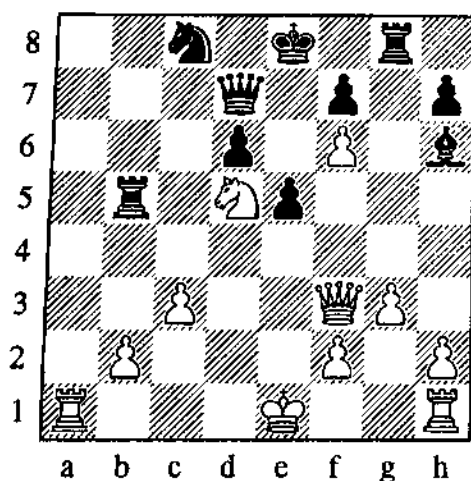
22.0-0 ♜g4! 23.♜xg4 ♜xg4 24.♞fd1 ♗d7=

22...♞xb5

a) 22...♜g4 23.♜d3 e4 24.♜c4±

b) 22...♗f8 23.c4 ♜g4 24.♜xg4 (24.♜d3! e4 25.♜c3) 24...♞xg4 25.b3± White is dominating.

c) 22...♞g6 23.0-0 ♞xb5 24.♞a8±



23.♞a8!? ♜c6

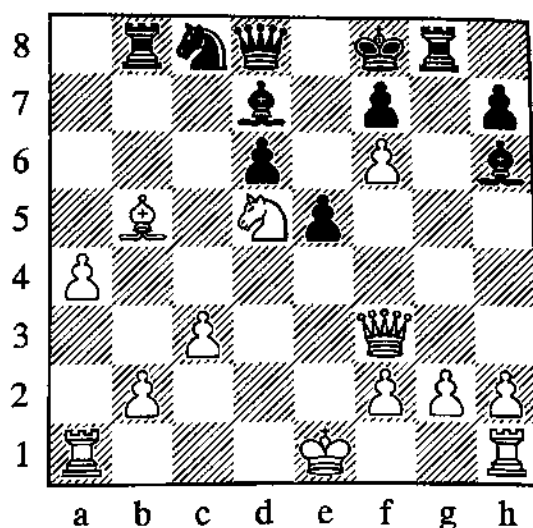
23...♜b7 24.0-0±

24.0-0 ♞xd5

24...♞g6 25.c4 ♞xd5 26.♜xd5 ♜xd5

27.cxd5±

25.♞xc8† ♜xc8 26.♜xd5 ♜a6 27.b4†



21.♗xd7 ♜xd7 22.0-0!?

There is no time to avoid the queen exchange in this case, but the endgame remains more pleasant for White.

22...♜g4!?

22...♞xb2 23.♞ab1 ♞xb1 24.♞xb1±

22...♞g5 23.♞fe1±

22. ♗b6 23.♗e7±

22. ♗e6 23.♞fe1!

23.a4 ♜g4! and the pawn will fall in the endgame.

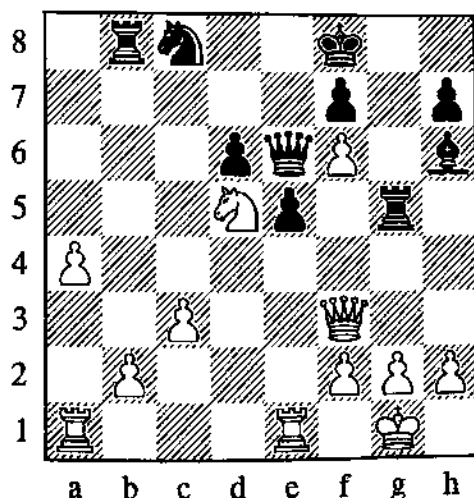
23.♞fd1 ♗g5! 24.a5 e4 25.♜e2 ♗xf6 is messy.

23...♞g5

23...♞xb2 24.♞ab1!±

23...♗g5 24.a5 ♞g6 25.a6±

23...♞g6 24.a5±





24.h4! ♖f5

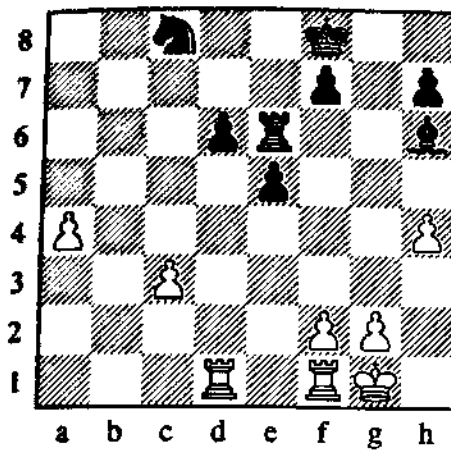
24...♖g4 25.♖e4!±

25.♖e4! ♖xb2 26.♖f1

The rook is completely stuck on f5.

26...♖d2 27.♖ad1 ♖xd5 28.♖xd5 ♖xf6

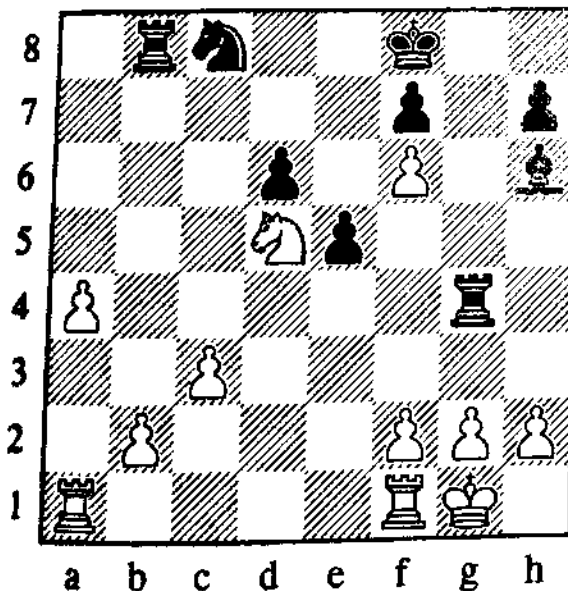
29.♖xc6 ♖xc6



30.a5 e4 31.♖fe1 ♖e8 32.a6 ♔g7 33.♖d5

Black continues to struggle in this endgame, as illustrated by the fact that both correspondence games to reach this position were won by White.

23.♖xg4 ♖xg4



24.a5!N

24.b4 was played in a couple of correspondence games, but I have a good reason for holding back the b-pawn.

24...♔e8 25.b3!

Preventing the g4-rook from coming back into the game.

25...♔d7

25...♖xb3 allows White to enter through the b-file. 26.a6 ♔a7 27.♖ab1!±

26.♖fb1 ♖e4

After 26...♔e6 27.f3 ♖g8 28.c4 ♔g5 29.b4 ♔xf6 30.b5± White dominates completely.

27.g3!? ♔e6 28.c4

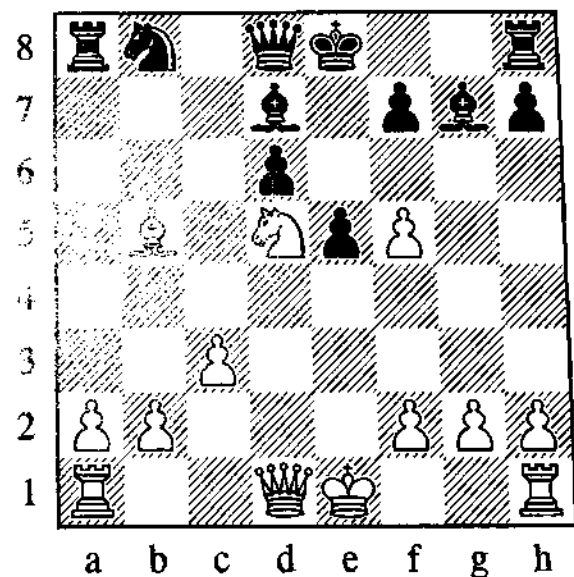
White can keep pressing in this structure.

28...♖d4

28...♔g5 29.a6 ♔a7 30.f4 ♔h6 (30...exf4 31.♖e1!±) 31.♔f2 exf4 32.gxf4±

29.a6 ♔a7 30.h4±

## B) 15...♔b8



This is another line that doesn't inspire popularity in practical games, although it's been hard to prove anything against it in correspondence games. But unlike 14...♖c8, which is similar to this in that regard, here White has a host of different tries, and Black's life seems to be far from easy in any of them. Therefore, from a practical point of

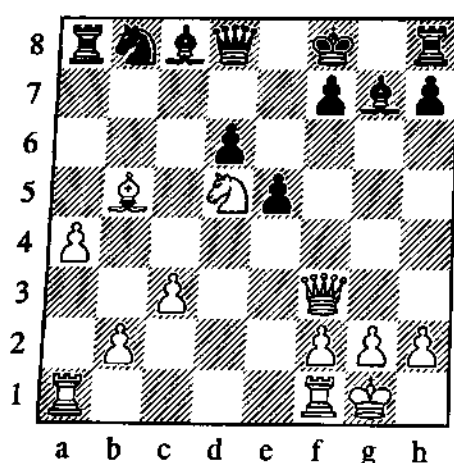
view, Black's choice makes little sense when compared to the alternatives, so I wouldn't worry too much about these lines. Even so, we need to have something ready.

### 16.a4!?

16. ♖g4 0-0 17.c4! deserves attention, as it aims to play a more middlegame-type of position, but this is also more double-edged.

Black needs to play very accurately to survive. B1) 16... ♖xb5 and B2) 16... 0-0 have often been played interchangeably, but playing first ...0-0 is essential to avoid some nasty additional options from White.

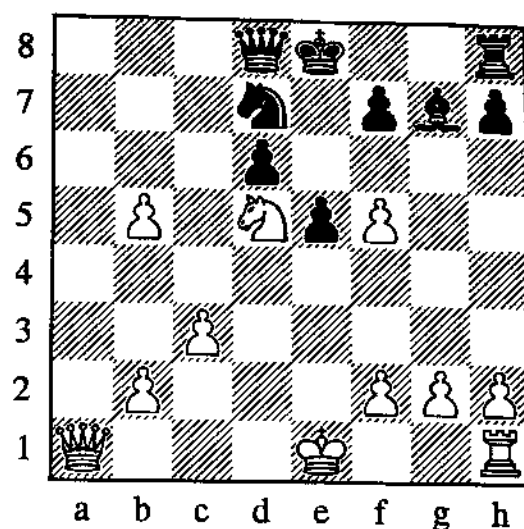
Instead 16... ♖f8 seems rather strange. White just continues the same way with 17.0-0 ♖xf5 18. ♖f3 ♖c8.



19. ♖e7! ♖a7 20. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 21. ♖ad1= Nechaev – Abramov, corr. 2011. Black doesn't have much play, and it will take a long time for him to regroup.

### B1) 16... ♖xb5 17. axb5 ♖xa1 18. ♖xa1 ♖d7

After 18... 0-0 19. ♖a3! (19.0-0 ♖d7) it's difficult for Black to develop and get the set-up he wants. For White, 0-0, ♖a1, b5-b6 etc. will follow. 19... ♖h8 20.0-0 ♖g5 21. ♖xd6 ♖xf5 22. ♖e3± Lefebvre – Baillet, Nimes 2009.



### 19. ♖a6!?

19. ♖a7 0-0 20.0-0 transposes to line B22.

Now Black is forced to enter a rather bizarre line, which seems to be playable only in correspondence chess! Objectively, White has a rather pleasant position, and will score especially well over the board.

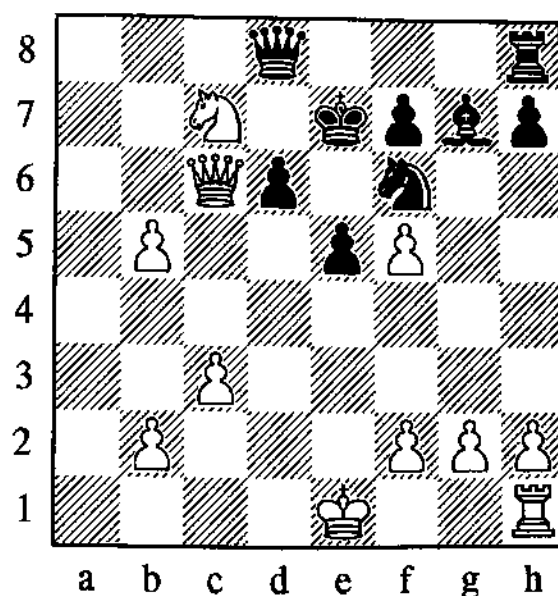
### 19... ♖f6

19... ♖b8? 20. ♖c6+-. Or after 19... 0-0 20. ♖d6 e4 21.0-0 ♖e5 22. ♖b4 ♖e8 23.c4 ♖f6 24. ♖e3 White is simply better.

### 20. ♖a6+ ♖d7

20... ♖f8 21.0-0±

### 21. ♖a8+ ♖d8 22. ♖c7+ ♖d7 23. ♖c6+ ♖e7



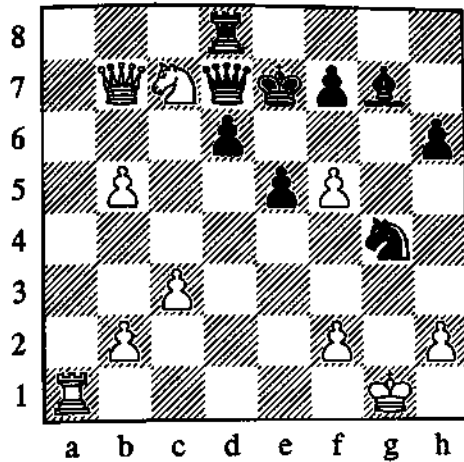


**24.g4! ♖h6!**

The alternatives offer a clear advantage to White.

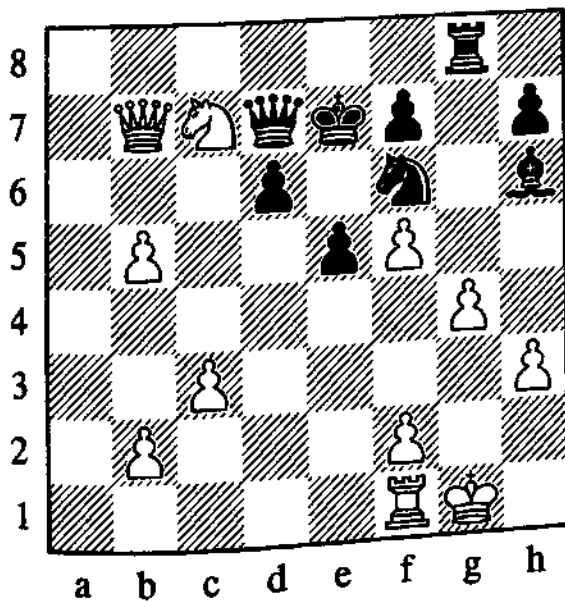
24...♖d7 25.g5±

24...h6 leaves Black playing without his bishop, as the following lines show: 25.0-0! ♖d7 26.♖b7 ♖d8 27.♖a1 ♖xg4 (27...♖f8 28.♖a7 ♖g8 29.♖b6±)



28.♔d5† ♖e8 29.♖xd7† ♖xd7 30.b6 ♖b7 31.♖a7 ♖b8 32.♖e7† ♖f8 33.b7 ♖f6 34.♖c7 ♖xb7 35.♖c8†! (less convincing is 35.♖xb7 ♖xd5 36.♖d7±) 35...♔e8 36.f6 ♖b8 37.b4  
Arithmetically, Black has an extra piece, but White is effectively a piece up, and should win.

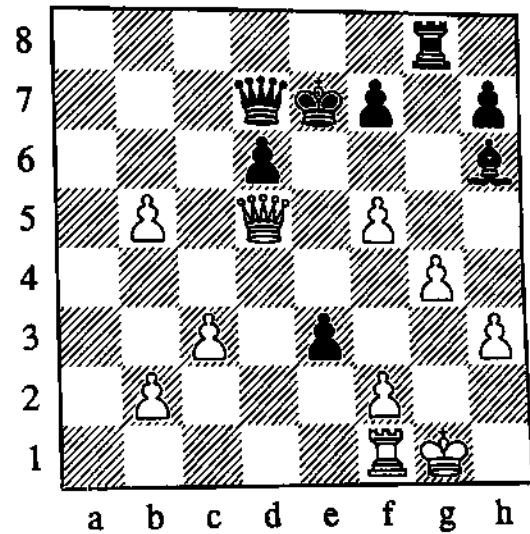
25.0-0 ♖d7 26.♖b7 ♖g8 27.h3

**27...e4!**

An interesting defensive resource.

27...♖xf5 28.♔d5† ♖e6 29.♖e7† ♖xd5 30.♖xf7† ♖c5 31.♖xg8 ♖xg8 32.gxf5 ♖xb5 Black was able to hold this endgame in correspondence chess, but it seems unpleasant to play. 33.♖d1 ♖c6 34.♖g2 ♖f6 35.♖a1±

28.♔d5† ♖xd5 29.♖xd5 e3

**30.f4! ♖N**

After this novelty we should be able to achieve a one-sided position where White is pressing. Even though Black maintains drawing chances, he is far from reaching clear equality.

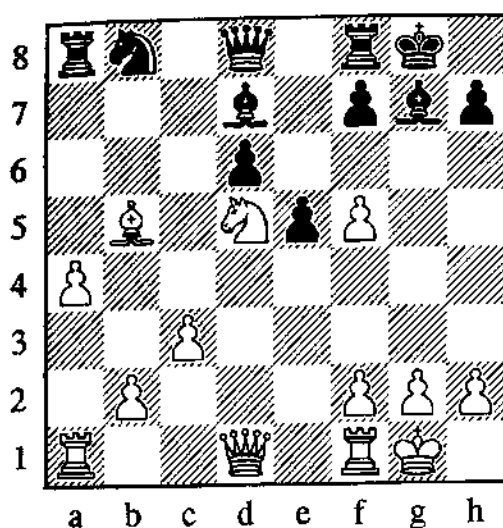
Both games continued 30.b6 ♖b8 and Black was able to hold.

**30...♖a7**

30...e2 31.♖e4† ♖f8 32.♖e1 d5 33.♖e3 ♖xb5 34.♖f2± Black is completely stuck with his pieces on the kingside.

31.♖g2 ♖a8 32.♖xa8 ♖xa8 33.♖f3 ♖a5 34.♖xe3 ♖xb5 35.b4 ♖g7 36.♖d3±

B2) 16...0-0 17.0-0

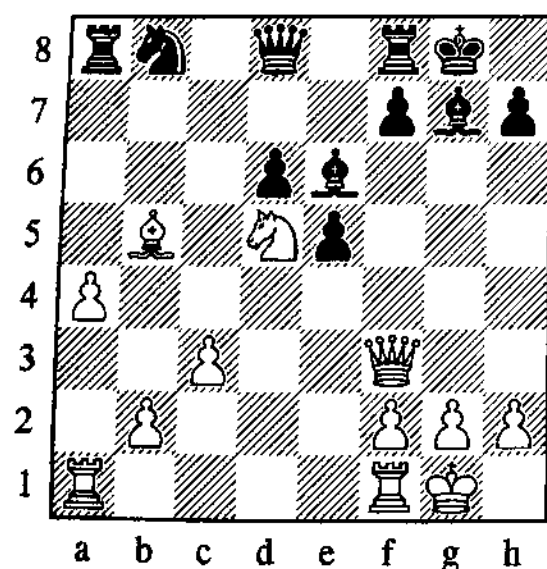


The d7-bishop has a choice of captures, which leads to a further split: B21) 17...♙xf5 or B22) 17...♙xb5!

B21) 17...♙xf5

This is a practical continuation, but White seems to be doing well as long as he doesn't overestimate Black's initiative on the kingside.

18.♙f3 ♖e6



19.♘f6+!?

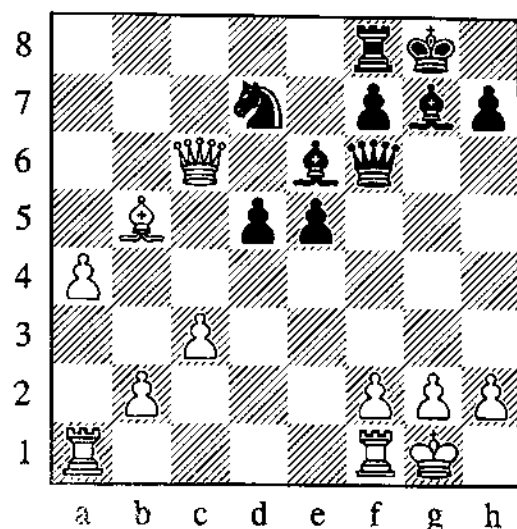
Or 19.♘e7+ ♙xe7 20.♙xa8 d5 (20...♘d7!?) was Kaidanov – Polgar, Hilton Head 2010,

but it seems better to force the queen out to f6 where it's more in the way of the black pieces.

19...♙xf6

19...♙xf6 20.♙xa8 d5 21.a5 e4 22.♙b7 ♙e5 23.a6±

20.♙xa8 ♘d7 21.♙c6 d5



22...e4

In the game, White was worried about Black's play, particularly the ...♘e5 jump, but as we'll see, it's not so scary. 22.♙c7 ♙f5 23.a5 e4 24.♙xd7 ♙xd7 25.♙g3 ♙b5 26.♙fd1 ♙e6 ♖ Azarov – Bobras, Czech Republic 2013.

22...e4 23.a6 ♙f4

White is ready for the immediate knight jump: 23...♘e5 24.♙b6 ♙g6 (24...♙g5 25.♙e3±) 25.♙e2 ♘f3+ 26.♙h1±

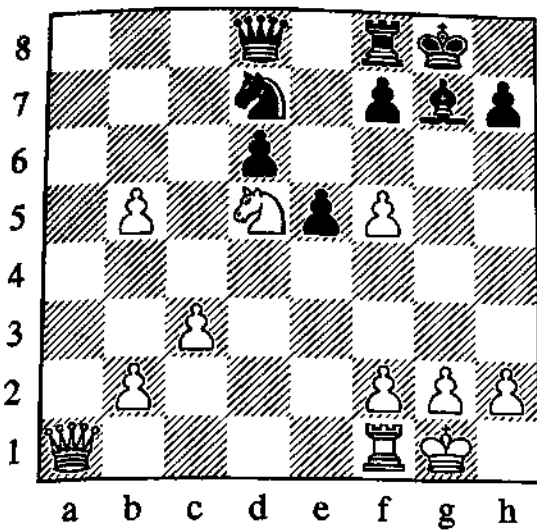
24.♙e2 ♘e5 25.♙c5 ♘d7 26.♙e3 ♙c7 27.♙fd1 ♙a8 28.♙a3

Once Black starts playing passively like this, White can press without any concerns.

28...♙e5 29.g3 ♘b6 30.♙da1 ♙a7 31.♙a5 ♘d7 32.♙d1±



B22) 17...♙xb5! 18.axb5 ♖xa1 19.♗xa1 ♘d7

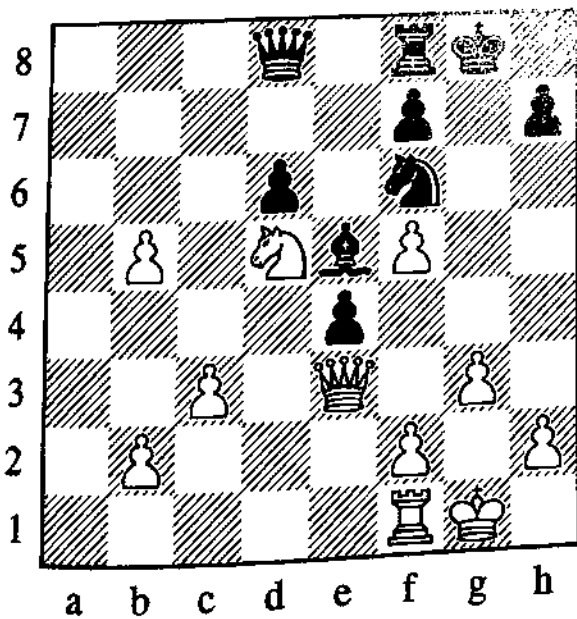


This line seems to be played almost exclusively in correspondence chess, which is understandable, because in the upcoming positions Black requires a lot of accuracy to fight for a draw. But even so, it's not so easy to prove something definite for White.

20.♗a7

20.♗a6 ♘f6 21.♘b4!?N also deserves attention, but I will focus on the main line.

20...e4 21.g3 ♙e5 22.♗e3 ♘f6

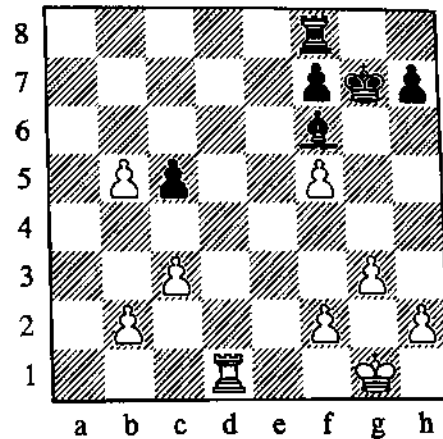


23.♞d1!?N

Trying to create a solid blockade to prevent any Black counterplay. And once White

consolidates – for instance with b2-b3, c3-c4 and rook on d5 – Black will have no counterplay at all, and White can target his position on both flanks.

Taking the pawn is more natural of course, but as the correspondence games showed, Black is able to rustle up enough counterplay to hold: 23.♘xf6† ♙xf6 24.♗xe4 ♗b6 25.♗g4† ♘h8 26.♗c4 ♘g7 27.♞d1 ♗c5! 28.♗xc5 dxc5

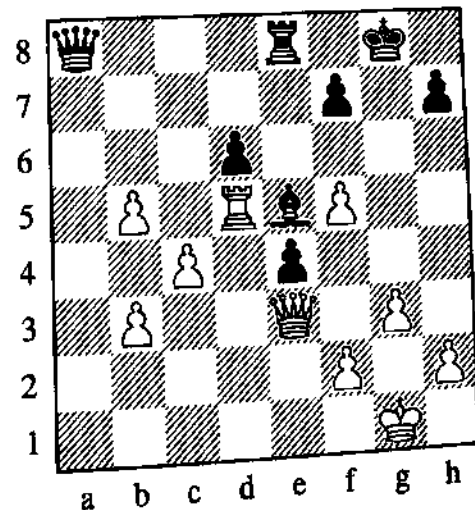


29.♞d5 c4 30.♞c5 ♖b8 31.g4 ♙e7 32.♞xc4 ♖xb5= Nilsson – Moucka, corr. 2010.

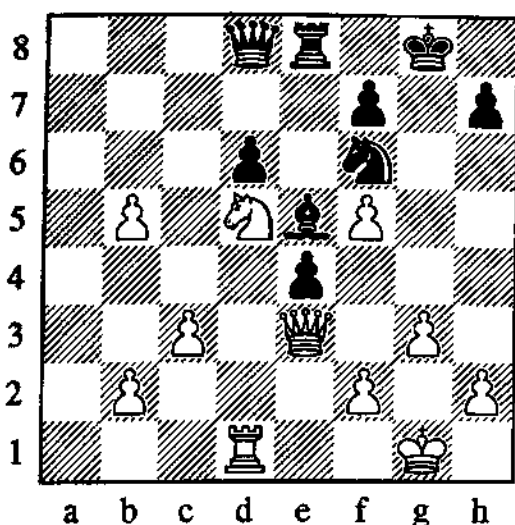
23... ♞e8

Black stops us gaining our ideal blockade with ♗b3-c4.

Allowing the blockade would be unwise: 23...♘xd5 24.♞xd5 ♞e8 25.c4 ♗a8 (25...♙xb2 26.c5! ♙e5 27.c6±) 26.b3±



This would be my dream position. Next  $\text{c}g2$ , and perhaps even starting to push the kingside pawns, or just slowly expanding on the queenside.



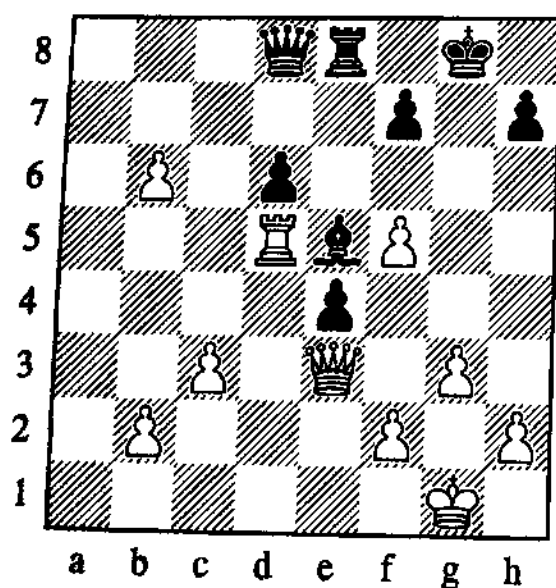
#### 24.b6!?

Unfortunately we're forced to commit to this move.

24.c4  $\text{c}xb2$  25.b6 deserves some attention, but I guess Black will figure out a way to hold.

24.b3  $\text{c}xd5$  25. $\text{c}xd5$   $\text{c}c8!$  attacks both the c3- and f5-pawns.

#### 24... $\text{c}xd5$ 25. $\text{c}xd5$

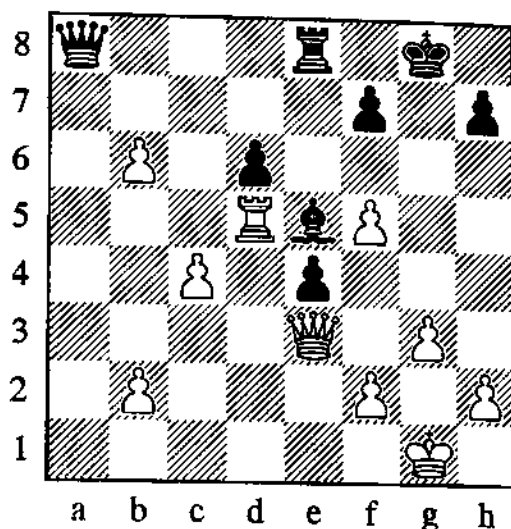


#### 25... $\text{c}a8$

25... $\text{c}f6$  26.h4!  $\text{c}c7$  27.b3 The b6-pawn is a slight weakness, but it's not easy to target, and White's play seems to be so much easier. 27... $\text{c}a8$  28.c4  $\text{c}g7$  29. $\text{c}g2\pm$

#### 26.c4

26. $\text{c}b5$   $\text{c}c6!$  27. $\text{c}b4$  d5 28.b7 f6 and the bishop on e5 keeps everything together.



#### 26... $\text{c}c6$ 27.b3

An interesting position to analyse further.

#### 27...f6!

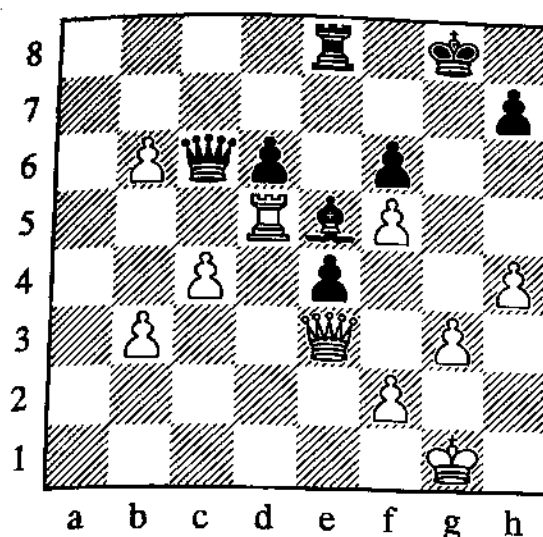
A slightly ugly move, but it had to be done. Now it's not easy to break through.

27... $\text{c}b8$  28.f6!  $\text{c}xf6$  29. $\text{c}h6\pm$  and White is able to keep all those impressive queenside pawns alive.

#### 28.h4!?

28. $\text{c}xc4$   $\text{c}xb6$  29.c5!  $\text{c}xb3$  (not 29... $\text{dxc5}$  30. $\text{c}d7!$   $\text{c}b4$  31. $\text{c}e2+$ — with the idea of  $\text{c}h5$ ) 30. $\text{c}xd6$   $\text{c}d8$  31.d7  $\text{c}b6$  Frankly, I am not sure how to assess this position, although it's clear only White is trying to find some way to break through.





I would like to continue to play with the concept of my blockade. So, put my rook on b5, and then slowly advance the kingside pawns. It's hard to say precisely what's happening here, but it would be an interesting position to play. Particularly over the board, White's prospects on the kingside are not without foundation (as you might think from looking at the computer's 0.00 assessment) since Black doesn't really have many moves.

28...♖b8 29.♖b5 ♔h8 30.g4 ♖b7 31.♔g1 ♔g7 32.g5

Of course I'm not quite sure how I'll break through eventually, but White is the one trying.

## Conclusion

15...♖b8?! and 15...♔b8 are less appealing moves than the quick-castling idea we shall see in the next chapter, but they are both common enough to be worth close attention.

15...♖b8?! fails to address Black's problems and offers White a rather clear route to an advantage, as I outlined.

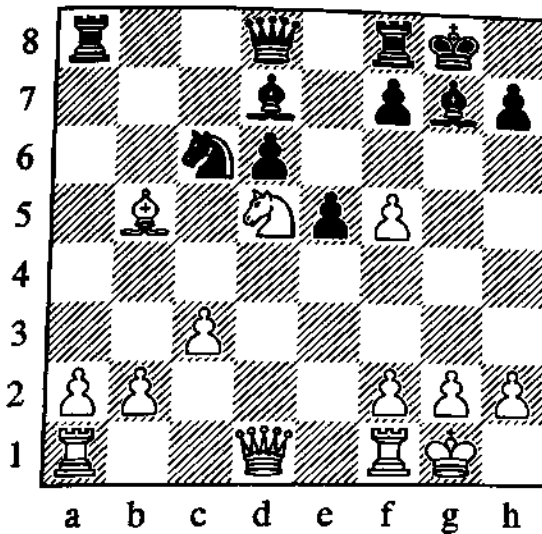
15...♔b8 is more challenging, as White does not have a definitive path to an advantage. Despite this, 15...♔b8 is seen more often in correspondence chess than over the board. This is understandable as Black needs to play with perfect accuracy, with a draw the most he can hope for; over-the-board players tend to prefer lines where they can at least dream of winning.

My lines against 15...♔b8 put Black under great pressure, but I have not found an authoritative refutation.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6  
 5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6 7.♕g5 a6 8.♗a3 b5  
 9.♕xf6 gxf6 10.♗d5 f5 11.♕d3 ♕e6 12.c3  
 ♕g7 13.♗xb5 axb5 14.♕xb5 ♕d7 15.exf5 0-0

As we saw in the previous chapter, it is possible for Black to delay castling, but now we deal with the more natural plans involving quick castling.

16.0-0

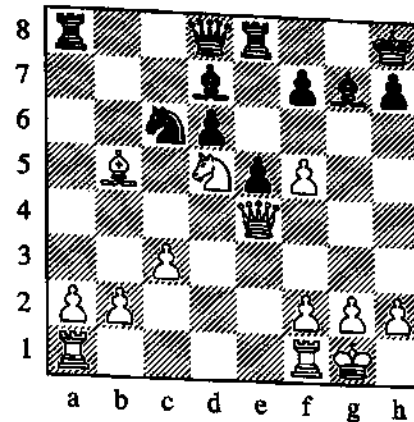


Now A) 16...♖a7!? is the only serious alternative to the usual B) 16...e4.

16...♖b8 17.a4 transposes to variation A1 of the previous chapter. Basically, Black allows White to get the bind with the queen on c4 and after that, it is all about Black's suffering.

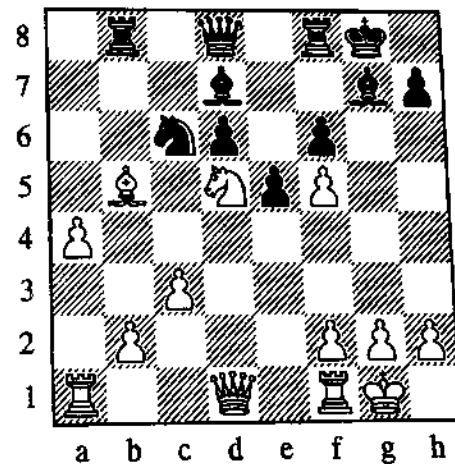
16...♕h8 17.a4 ♕g8 Black is really doing nothing at all, which gives White a free hand. There are many ways to continue, but the simplest seems to be: 18.♖f3 ♖b8 19.♖fd1 ♕f8 20.♖e4 ♖g5 21.♗e3± Lupulescu – Milanovic, Korinthos 2004.

16...♖e8 also allows White to establish the bind with ♖g4-e4. The lines can easily transpose into the 16...♖b8 ones, but there can be a couple of extra options: 17.♖g4 ♕h8 18.♖e4



18...f6 (18...♗b8 isn't particularly challenging to White's idea of advancing the pawns. The simplest reply is 19.c4 ♕xb5 20.cxb5 ♗d7 21.a4 ♗b6 22.♗xb6 ♖xb6 23.♖fd1± intending b2-b4 and so on.) 19.a4 And now Black always goes 19...♖b8 – which again transposes to variation A1 of the previous chapter.

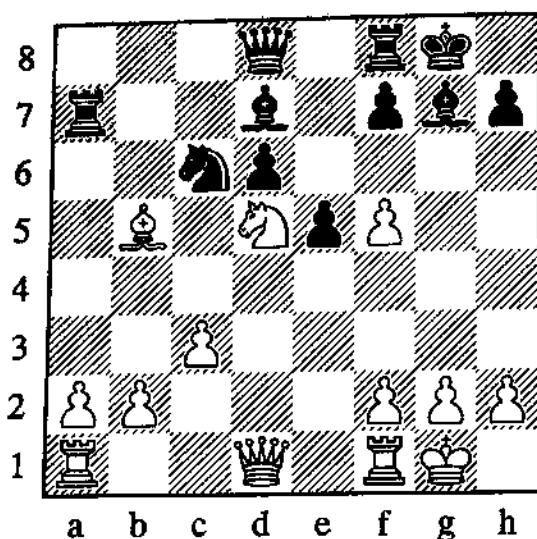
16...f6 is extremely rare, but I will use it to show some ideas: 17.a4 ♖b8 (17...♗e7 18.♕xd7 ♖xd7 19.♗b6±)



18.♗e3! There are other possible moves, but this exploits the d6-weakness perfectly (after 18.♖g4 ♗e7! Black didn't have to waste time on moves such as ...♖e8). 18...♗e7 (18...♖c7 19.♖d5† ♕h8 20.♖fd1 ♗e7 21.♖xd6 ♖xd6 22.♖xd6 ♕xb5 23.axb5 ♖xb5 24.♖d7 ♗c8 25.b4±) 19.♖xd6 ♕xb5 20.♖e6† ♕h8 21.axb5 ♖xb5 22.♖fd1±



## A) 16...♞a7!?



This is one of the typical Sveshnikov lines that has not been played in over-the-board games, but has been used successfully in the correspondence sphere with an array of defensive computer-like ideas. The idea right now is fairly simple: Black frees the queen to move from d8 because ♖b6 will no longer be a threat, and he hopes that the rook is better placed on a7 – after all it defends the d7-bishop, and thus increases Black's knight-jump options.

## 17.a4

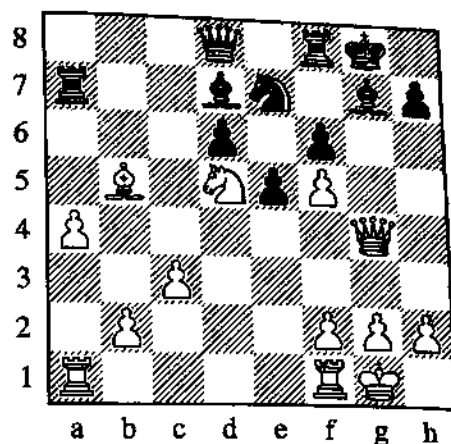
Continuing in the usual way.

It looks tempting to continue:

## 17.♞g4

Provoking ...f6, but the problem is that Black is able to quickly get in ...♞e7 after this, and neutralize White's queenside. In the variations with ...♞e8, Black spent extra time (...♞e8, ...♞h8, and ...f6) instead of just ...f6 before getting in ...♞e7. Thus here he is able to put the extra moves to good use:

17...f6 18.a4 ♞e7!



## 19.♞xd7

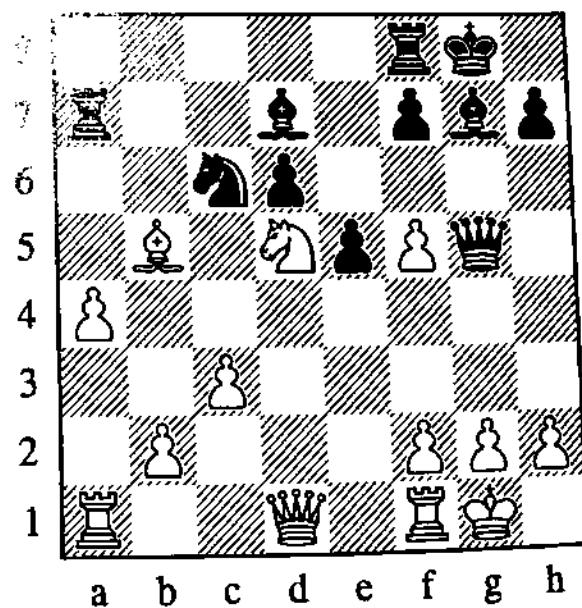
19.♞fd1 ♞xd5 20.♞xd5 ♞xb5 21.♞xb5 d5! 22.♞d1 ♞a8 23.♞bxd5 ♞xa4 24.b4 White isn't risking much, but he doesn't have enough for more than equality after 24...♞h8.

19...♞xd7 20.♞c4 ♞xd5 21.♞xd5† ♞h8 22.a5 ♞b8!

22...♞fa8 23.b4 and White will continue to dominate.

23.b4 ♞b5

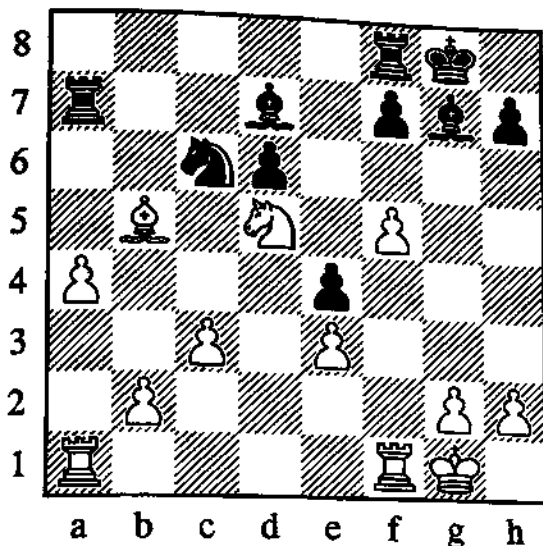
Followed by ...d5 and Black is probably okay.



I will offer a brief summary of my analysis after A1) 18.♞f3, though I recommend A2) 18.a5!N.

18. ♖b6 ♖b8 19. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 20. ♖xd6 ♖xf5 intending ...e4 and so on, is a typical situation where Black's activity will easily compensate for all the queenside pawns.

A1) 18. ♖f3 e4 19. ♖e3 ♖xe3 20. fxe3



20...h5!

After 20...♗e5 21.f6! Black isn't in time to play ...h5 and ...♗h7 because ♗xc6 is already a threat.

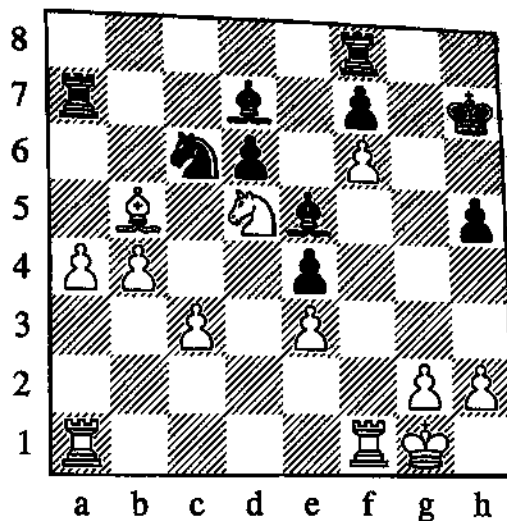
This is the key position. Analysing it in detail is like hitting your head against a brick wall, as the computer keeps coming up with ideas that don't seem to make much sense, but even though White seems to take this risk, it's very hard for White to start pushing the pawns on the queenside. A few lines:

21.b4

21.f6 ♗h6 Now e3 is under attack, and ♗f2 was played in a few games, but it doesn't look particularly impressive.

21...♗e5!? 22.f6 ♗h7

Now various rook moves are possible.



23. ♗a2!N

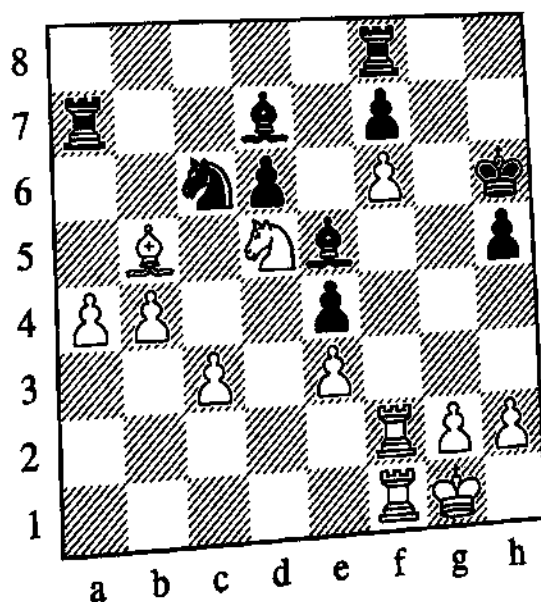
23. ♗a2! is probably an ideal square, except that c3 will be weak: 23...♖b8! 24. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 25.a5 ♗g6 26. ♗e7† ♗h6 27. ♗c6 ♗aa8 28.b5 ♗xc3 29.a6 ♗e5 And Black defends.

23. ♗a1!? Black will just continue with the typical ...♗h6 and ...h4 drama, waiting for White to do something. And then at crucial points the computer finds defensive resources such as a timely sacrifice (...♗xb4 or ...♗xa5) or annoying moves like ...♗b8.

23...♗h6

23...♖b8 24. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 25.a5 ♗g6 26. ♗e7† ♗h7 27. ♗c6 ♗c7 28.b5±

24. ♗af2





**24...Bb8!**

Preparing against ideas such as 24...h4 25.g4. And now it seems really hard to do anything at all with White.

Black is well advised to avoid: 24...h4 25.g4! h3 26.Bf5±

**25.g3**

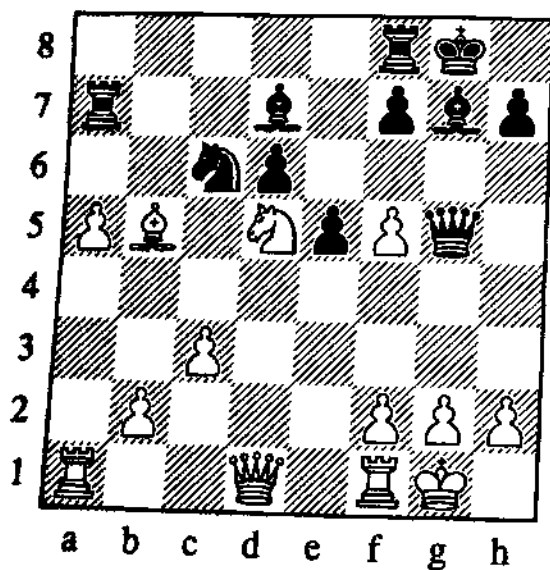
25.c4 h4 intending ...Bg5 and wait, wait, wait...

**25...h4 26.g4 h3!**

Or 26...Bg5 27.h3 is too easy for White.

**27.Bf5 Bg6**

After deep analysis I can say one thing for sure: this is some weird mess.

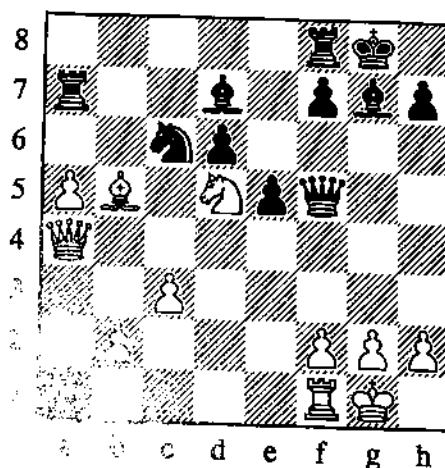
**A2) 18.a5!±N**

White at first seems to have pretty decent prospects in the usual line with 18.Bxf3, but then, as the correspondence games have shown, the position gets stuck in a strange kind of deadlock, although Black does need to show a lot of accuracy. A lot of that work has already been done for Black by the correspondence players, so it makes sense to avoid it. And a4-a5 is a perfectly flexible option to do that – it avoids most of the instantly simplifying

lines that White often runs into, and leads to positions where White has many ways to continue trying. I can't claim to have analysed it exhaustively – after all, it's still a relatively unknown line from Black – but it's certainly enough to pump you up with ideas for your game. The basic idea is to prepare to meet ...Bxf5 with Bxa4. Besides that, it's always useful to start the pawn advance...

**18...e4**

18...Bb8 19.c4 gets us ready for the rook-lift idea, which you might remember from many other lines in the Sveshnikov. Also, it does little to hinder White's queenside.

**18...Bxf5 19.Ba4!****19...e4**

Now, Black is stuck in a sort of bind on the queenside. And while he struggles to get undone, White can try a different combination of moves. There are ideas to slowly push the pawns, maybe include Bb3 at some point, or just try to keep everything under control in the centre. I haven't analysed every interesting idea, but the position offers ample opportunities for White without any serious worry.

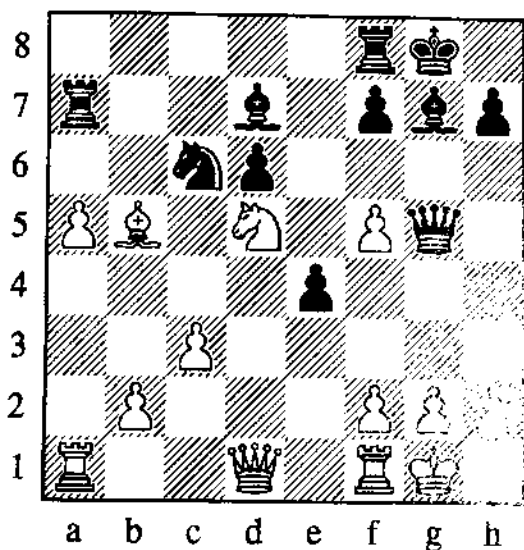
19...Bxa5 20.Bxa5! Qxa5 21.Qe7± Bh8 22.Qxf5+–

**20.a6!?**

20.Qb6 Bcc7 21.b4 (repeating with 21.Qd5 is always possible) 21..e4 22.Ba3∞

20...e4

20...♖e6 21.♟b6 (Also 21.♞fd1 or 21.c4 deserves attention – the position doesn't change dramatically.) 21...♞cc7 22.♞fd1♞ White has different options to continue exerting pressure, and things aren't very forcing, thus it doesn't make sense to analyse it in extensive depth. And while in all these lines Black seems to be just hanging on according to the computer assessments, practically, it seems harder to play moves for him, while White always keeps options to simplify. I have a feeling if we go deep enough, we could probably also convince the engine that things are rather bleak for Black, if White is sufficiently accurate. But that is just not required for a practical player in such situations. 21.♟b6 ♞cc7 22.♟xd7 ♞xd7 23.♞xe4±



Now White needs to show some accuracy.

19.♟e3!

19.♟b6 ♟e5 20.♟xd7 ♟xd7 21.♞d5 is possible, but I don't like the idea of simplifying just yet.

19...♟e5

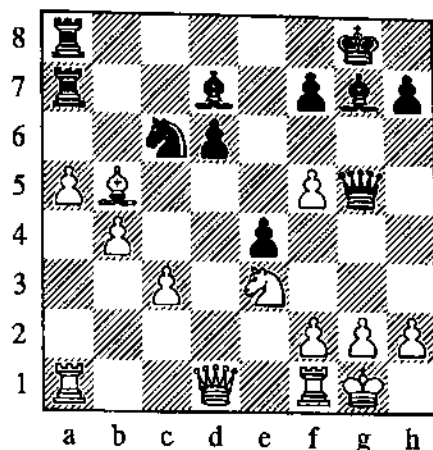
After 19...♞b8 20.♟xc6 ♟xc6 21.♞xd6 ♞c8 22.♞fd1, compared to the usual positions with this structure, the f5-pawn is still alive which of course makes Black's life much harder.

19...♞fa8

A computer-like idea – Black provokes b2-b4, and then he wants us to believe that it's not so useful for White because ♞a4-e4 then won't be an option! But of course there will be enough other plans for White, while the rook looks a little strange on a8.

20.b4

20.a6!?



20...♟e5

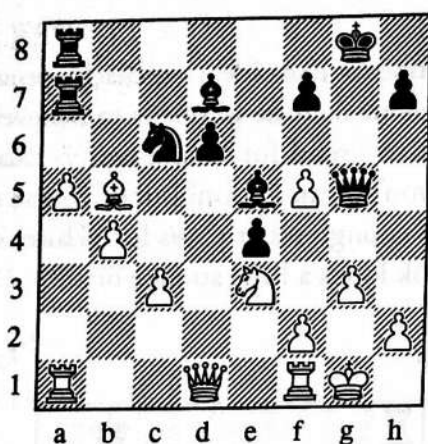
20...♟xc3 21.♞c1 ♟xb4 22.♟xc6 ♟xc6 23.♞xc6 ♟c5 24.♟c4!? Maybe not the only move, but I like the idea of keeping the knight alive. I don't see any easy way for Black to equalize: 24...♞xf5 25.h3 In the best case, Black will get some major-piece rookgame with an open king, and possibly drop a pawn along the way...

20. ♟e5 21.♟xd7 ♟xd7 22.♞a3 White has everything under control, and can play easily on both sides. 22...♟e5 23.g3♞ Followed by h2-h4, and clearly the queen can't be feeling too happy.

21.g3!?

Again, there were other moves, but I like the idea of kicking the queen away with h2-h4. If Black doesn't play accurately, his position could completely collapse any instant. Now I just have a few lines to show some ideas, but there are a lot of different options from White to pose problems for Black, so it's probably a good time to start thinking during a game.





21...Bb8

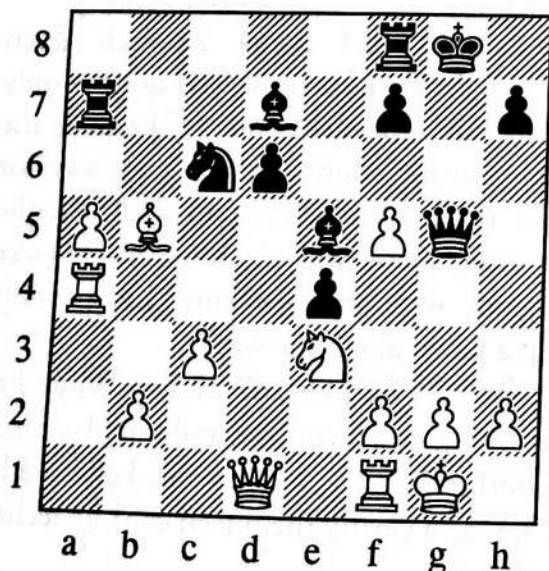
21...Kh8 22.Ba3

22.Qa4 Qe7 23.Qxd7 Bxd7 24.h4 Kg7 25.b5!?

Opening the b-file, and then trying to exploit the black queen being completely out of the game.

25...Bxb5 26.Qa4 Bbb7 27.Bfb1 Qf8 28.a6

20.Ba4!?



20...Kh8

20...Bb8 21.Bxe4!

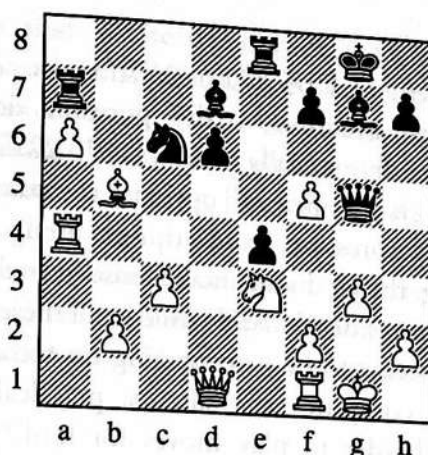
20...Be8 21.g3

Threatening both f2-f4 and Bxe4.

21...Bg7 22.a6

Not 22.Qxd6 Qe5! and Black gets an attack:

23.Qxd7 Bxd7 24.Qb6 Qf3+ 25.Kh1 Qh5 26.h4 Qxh4+



22...Qf6

Intending ...Qe5.

22...Qe5 23.Qxd7 Qxd7 (23...Qf3+ 24.Qg2

Qh5 25.h3+-) 24.Qxd6+

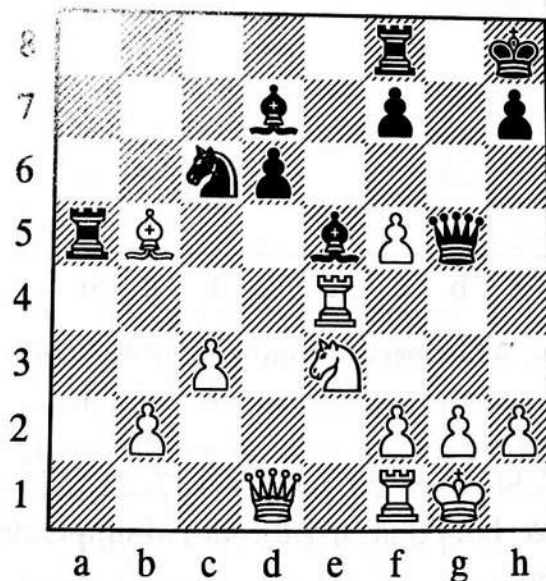
22...Qh6 23.Qe2+

23.Ba3!?

Preparing to meet ...Bb8 with Qa4, and we're now ready to start with b2-b4 etc. Black is still not ready to untangle his pieces.

23.Qc4 is another possibility, but I don't want to get involved in any forcing lines.

21.Ba4 Ba5

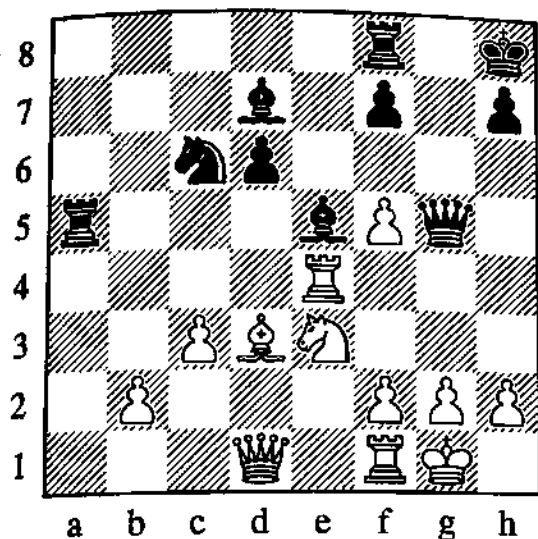


22.Qd3!?

There are other moves such as Qa4-c2, or even Qe2 is possible. In general, the type of position remains the same. The pawns don't seem too dangerous on the queenside, but we still have complete control, and we can start

playing on the kingside as well, while Black has little to show in terms of counterplay.

22.f4 ♖xf4 23.♟xf4 ♜xb5 24.♞xd6 ♞d8 and Black probably holds somehow, but we don't need to hurry with simplifications.



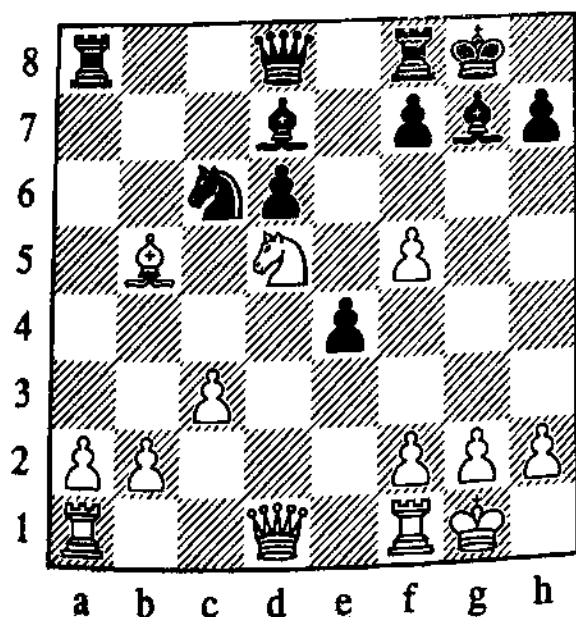
22...♞h6

22...♞g7 23.b4 ♜aa8 24.♞g4→

22...d5 23.f4 ♞g7 24.♞xe5 ♜xe5 25.fxe5 ♞xe5 26.♜c2±

23.g3 ♖f6 24.b4 ♜aa8 25.♞f4

B) 16...e4



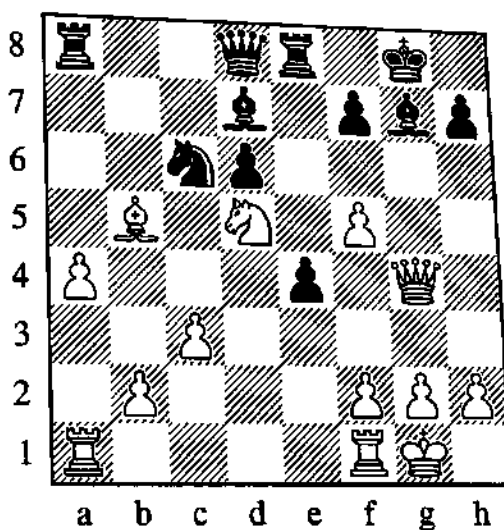
This is required to create the option of ...♜e5, but more importantly to prevent ideas such as ♞g4-e4 which would completely clamp down on Black's position.

17.a4

This is the right move, since ♞g4 immediately wasn't possible.

17...♞e8 18.♞g4

Now 18...♜e5 fails to 19.♞xc4.



I used to consider B1) 18...♞c8?! a more precise move order because B2) 18...♜h8 was running into some trouble after ♞fe1. But as it turns out, 18...♜h8 actually does alright after that, and it's 18...♞c8 which allows a lot of extra options, while the possibility of moving somewhere else with the rook (for instance, going directly ...♞g8 in the line 18...♜h8 19.♞fe1) justifies an immediate ...♜h8.

B1) 18...♞c8?!

Overly smart. I'll just briefly mention a few of the extra options here:

19.♞fd1?

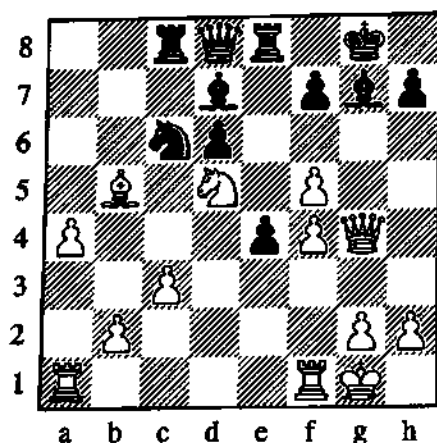
A major extra option for White; the move ♞fd1 makes sense because the rook on a1 can be used to support the pawns later on, but after ...♜h8, ♞fd1, then ...♞b8 was a lot stronger.



19.♖ad1 ♘h8 20.♞fe1 ♞e5 transposes to variation B232.

19.f4!?

This seems the most exciting option to me. If ...exf3, then White would get f5-f6 soon as well, and his position does look overwhelming, although it might need to be checked further. And without ...exf3, White's pawn on f4 looks really impressive – preventing both ...♞e5 and ...♘e5 ideas.



19...♘h8

Black's main idea is a quick ...♘e7, so that is what White must try to prevent.

19...exf3 20.♞xf3 with the idea of f5-f6.

20.♞h5

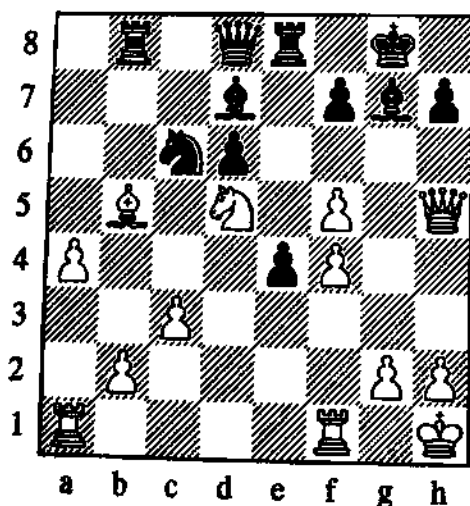
20.♞fd1 ♘e7! 21.♞h4 ♘xd5 22.♞xd8 ♞exd8 23.♞xd5 ♘xb5 24.axb5 ♞c5=

20...♘g8

20...♘e7 21.f6±

21.♘h1!? ♞b8

21...♘e7 22.♘xd7 ♞xd7 23.♘b6±



After the text move, Black is finally preparing ...♘e7 again. Now I rather like the following insane idea:

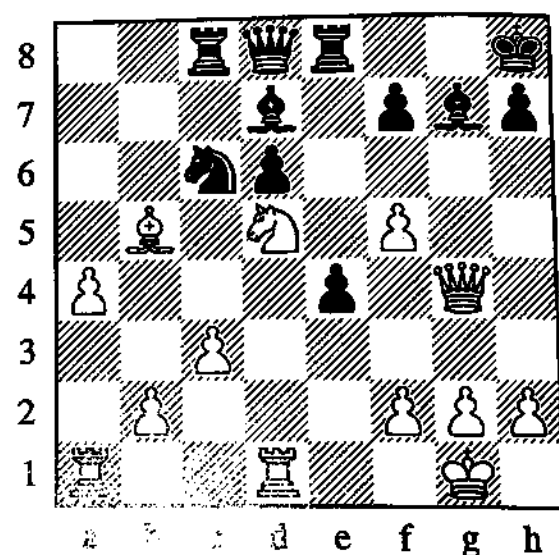
22.f6!? ♘xf6 23.g4

Of course the position remains extremely complicated – and from a theoretical standpoint I don't think we ought to analyse it further – but the idea does seem a lot of fun. Black's ...♘e7 remains impossible after:

23...♘g7 24.g5

With the idea of ♞g1, ♞ae1, rook lifts and so on; it seems really, really dangerous for Black.

19...♘h8



20.b4

20.♞f6 and transferring the rook along the 3rd rank is interesting, but 20...♞e5 21.♘e3 ♞f6 would have to be analysed further.

After my suggested novelty, White has strong play in a complex position, as the following lines illustrate:

20...♞b8!?

20...♘e5 21.♞xc4 ♘xb5 22.axb5±

20...♞e5 21.♘e3 ♞f6 22.♞e2! ♘xf5 23.♘xc6 ♞xc6 24.a5↑ and the pawns are too fast.

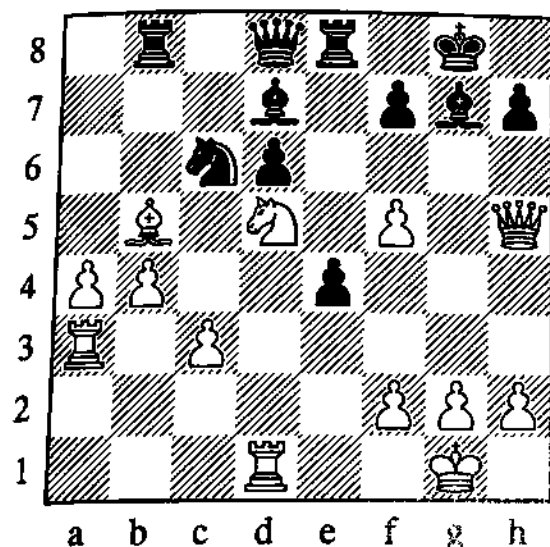
20...♘b8 21.g3!? Preparing an idea against ...♘xb5, as the following line shows. 21...♘xb5

22.f6! ♖xf6 23.axb5 ♘d7 24.♖a7 ♘e5  
25.♗xc4 (25.♗f5!?) 25...♘c6 26.♖e7 ♖xe7  
27.♗f3 ♖xc3 28.bxc6

21.♗h5  
21.♖a3!?

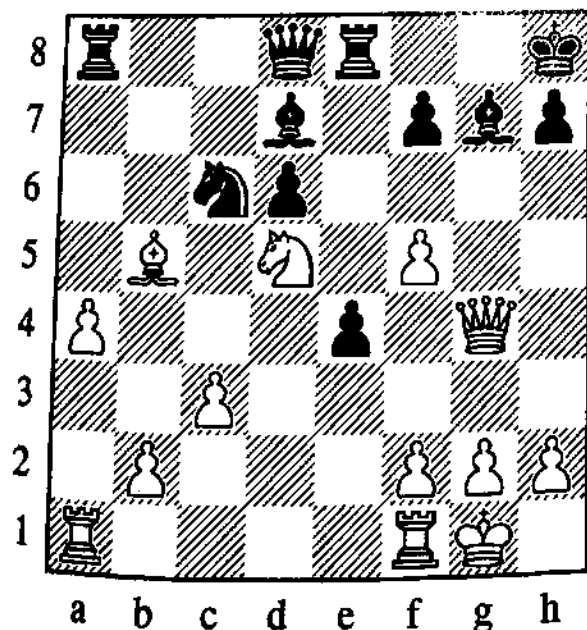
21...♘g8  
21...♘e5 22.♖xd7 ♘xd7 23.b5 ♘f6 24.♗xf7  
♘xd5 25.♗xd5±

22.♖a3→



Black faces many problems, with just one of White's ideas being c3-c4 and then the a3-rook swinging hard right.

B2) 18...♗h8



This is a lot more flexible than 18...♖c8.

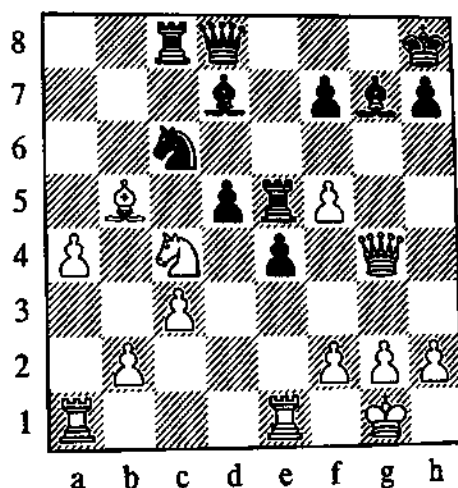
Now we should consider various tries to increase our understanding of the position. Initially, I had been very happy about B21) 19.♖fe1, but for reasons I will explain below, I feel White has to be more inventive. So I now prefer B22) 19.♗f4!N or B23) 19.♖ad1 when my novelty arrives a move later.

19.♖fd1 ♖b8! I'd really like to play 20.♗f4, but after 20...♖e5 21.♗h6 ♖g8 22.f6 ♗c8! the move ♖fd1 feels as though it was inappropriate.

B21) 19.♖fe1

This forces Black into action. A key point is that ...♖c8 has not been played, so after the typical moves ...♖e5 and ...♗f6, Black is not able to take with ...♖xf5. This remains an interesting practical try for White, since Black needs to be very accurate to hold, but I believe the following line works for Black:

19...♖e5 20.♘e3 ♗f6  
20...♖c8 21.♘c4 d5



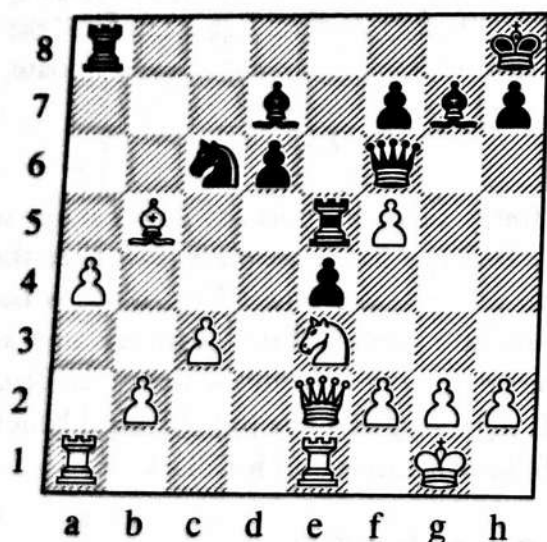
22.♘d6!N (22.♘xe5 ♘xe5 23.♗h5 ♖b8! was given by Kotronias, and eventually Black was just okay) White is going after the other rook. Then the rook on e5 remains rather misplaced, and White's a-pawn is much harder to keep in check: 22...♗f6 23.♘xc8 ♖xc8 24.a5 ♖xf5 25.♗d1 ♘a7 26.♖f1±



## 21. ♖e2

Black can't take with ... ♖xf5 as the c6-knight would be hanging. So White should be able to win an exchange with his various knight jumps.

In most of the established theory (21... ♖c5 and 21... ♖c8 were considered by Kotronias) White seems to me to have great winning chances. Instead it's an unexpected defence that saves the day for Black:



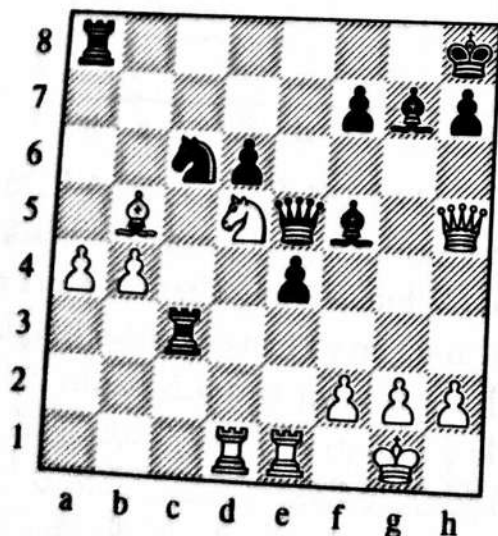
## 21... ♖g8!!

This looks a rather natural move, but its justification involves an impressive idea.

## 21... ♖c5

This really awkward move should alert White that he can force an advantage.

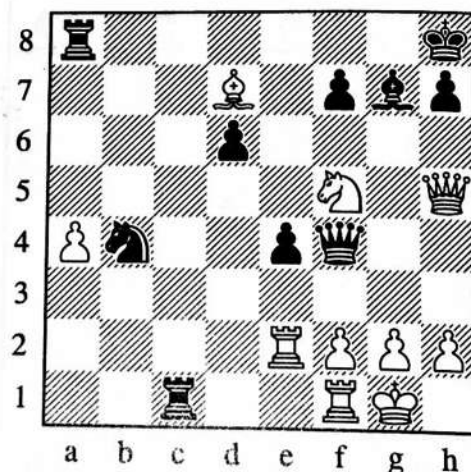
22. ♖ad1 ♖xf5 23. b4 ♖xc3 24. ♖d5 ♖e5 25. ♖h5!



Such a sequence might seem artificial, but considering how Black's pieces are tangled up, it's natural that such an option must exist. Black is forced to play:

25... ♖c2 26. ♖e3 ♖xb4 27. ♖xf5 ♖f4  
27... ♖c5 28. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 29. ♖h4 d5  
30. ♖e7±  
28. ♖e2! ♖c5  
28... ♖c1 29. ♖f1±  
29. ♖d7 ♖c1 30. ♖f1!

The new move when compared to Kotronias's analysis. After a later g2-g3, White can keep his king safe, while continuing to exert pressure due to his better pieces and a-pawn.



30... ♖xf1† 31. ♖xf1 ♖d3

31... ♖d8 32. g3 ♖c1† 33. ♖e1+-

32. g3 ♖c1† 33. ♖g2 ♖e1† 34. ♖xe1! ♖xe1  
35. ♖c6

The safest move.

35... ♖f8 36. a5

Winning the piece by force.

36... ♖xa5 37. ♖xg7 ♖xh5 38. ♖xh5 f5 39. h3

White is obviously better, but whether Black can hold a draw is a subject for an endgame book.

## 22. ♖g4

22. ♖ad1 ♖h6 23. ♖g4 ♖xg4 24. ♖xg4 ♖xf5 was interesting for me to explore further, but eventually I found Black had decent compensation everywhere. 25. ♖g3 ♖e6! With the idea of ... ♖f4, creating a big mess.

(25...♖e7 26.f4 ♖c5 27.♗f2 could be rather unpleasant for Black because his initiative is under control.)

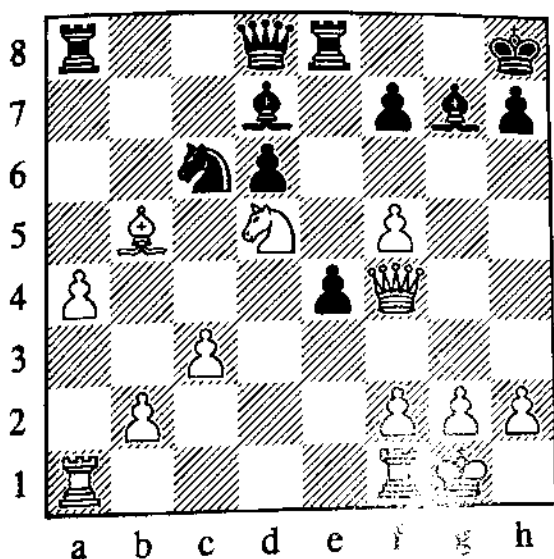
22...♗g5 23.♖xe5 ♖xe5 24.♗xe4

24.♗xd7? ♖f3! 25.♖h1 ♗e5! is the key idea. 26.g3 ♗h5 27.h4 ♗g4+

24...♗xf5

Black gets powerful compensation on the kingside, Belka – Feco, corr. 2012.

B22) 19.♗f4!?N



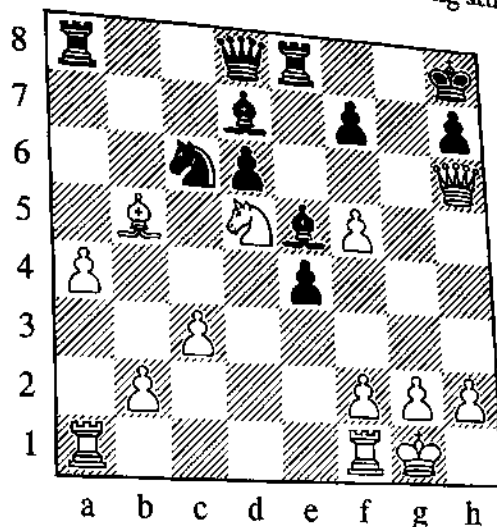
Utilizing Black's last move. The threat of f5-f6 is typical, but the main idea is to try and sow seeds of disharmony in Black's position. Black's most natural response is 19...♗e5 20.♗h6 ♖g8 21.f6 ♖g6 and so on, and the computer seems to think that Black is okay there, but it's also easy to notice that Black is being forced to place his pieces on awkward squares, which is a good sign when looking for practical tries.

19...♗e5

19...♗e5 20.f6 ♖xd5 21.♖ad1! This is the more accurate order, since fxg7 and then ♖ad1 would allow ...♖e7. 21...♖xd1 22.fxg7+ ♖g8 23.♖xd1 ♖e5 24.♗xe4 ♗xb5 25.axb5 ♖b8 26.♗b4 ♗b6 27.♖d5± White has pressure.

20.♗h6

Now Black must continue the forcing stuff:



20...♗g7!

The line mentioned above was:

20...♖g8 21.f6!

Forcing Black to misplace his pieces.

21...♖g6

21...♖b8 doesn't change much: 22.♖fe1?

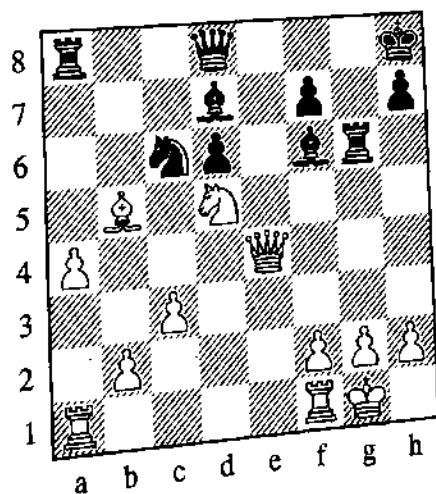
♖g6 23.♗h4 (23.♗e3 ♗xf6 24.♗xe4 ♗e5 25.f4 ♗g7 26.♗f3) 23...♖g4 (23...♗xf6 24.♖xf6 ♗xf6 25.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 26.♖xe4±) 24.♗h5 ♖g6 25.♖xe4 ♗xf6 26.♖d1±

22.♗e3 ♗xf6

22...♖a5 23.b4! ♗xb5 24.axb5 ♖c4 25.♗e2 ♖c8 26.♖a6 ♗xf6 27.♖c6±

22...♖g4 23.♗e2!

23.♗xe4





This seems pretty unpleasant for Black. White has ideas such as f4-f5, especially after ... $\text{e5}$  or ... $\text{d5}$ . And if:

23... $\text{g7}$  24. $\text{f4}$   $\text{f6}$

24... $\text{g4}$  25. $\text{g3}$ ! The rook on g4 is rather weird; White just has to regroup his pieces.

25... $\text{c8}$  26. $\text{g2}$   $\text{g5}$  27. $\text{a1}$

25. $\text{f1}$   $\text{e5}$

25... $\text{b6}$  26. $\text{e3}$   $\text{xe3}$  (26... $\text{d8}$  27. $\text{h5}$

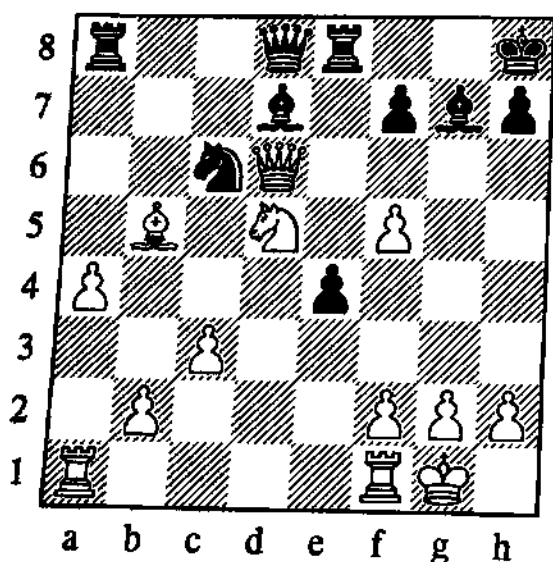
$\text{h6}$  28. $\text{e4}$   $\text{e6}$  29. $\text{f3}$   $\text{d5}$  30. $\text{d5}$ )

27. $\text{fxe3}$

26. $\text{h5}$

21. $\text{xd6}$

21. $\text{e3}$ !  $\text{d7}$  (21... $\text{e5}$  22. $\text{b6}$ !) 22. $\text{xe4}$   $\text{xf5}$  (22... $\text{dxf5}$  23. $\text{g4}$ !) 23. $\text{f3}$   $\text{e6}$  24. $\text{f4}$  It is hard to say if White has anything more than just enough compensation.



21... $\text{e5}$ !

21... $\text{e5}$  22. $\text{h6}$   $\text{xf5}$  23. $\text{f4}$ ! Preventing ... $\text{e6}$ , and Black is in some trouble (much less appealing is 23. $\text{xc6}$   $\text{e6}$  24. $\text{c5}$   $\text{h4}$ ! 25. $\text{g3}$   $\text{g8}$ →).

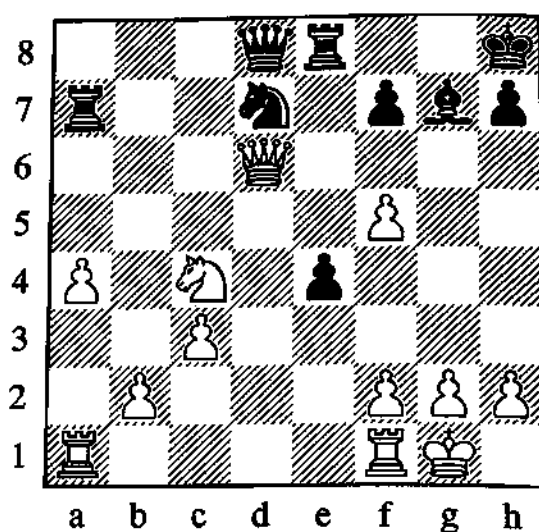
22. $\text{xd7}$   $\text{a7}$

It's difficult for White to prove anything clear-cut. The computer suggests the hard-to-believe idea of:

23. $\text{b6}$ !

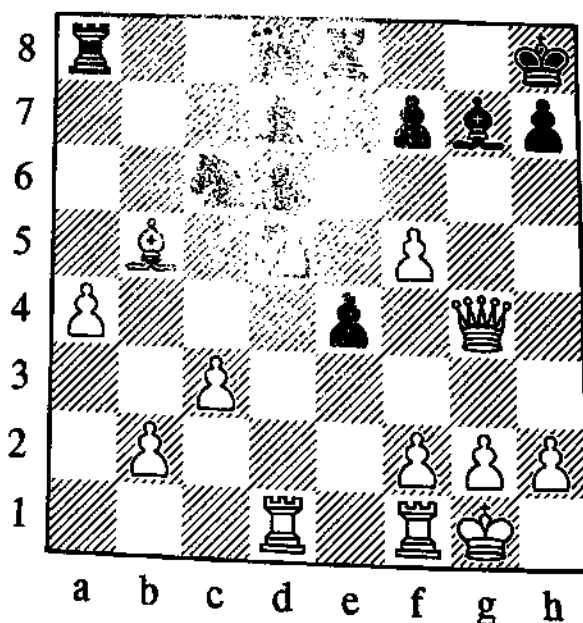
This rather unusual manoeuvre just aims to avoid ... $\text{xd7}$ .

23... $\text{xd7}$  24. $\text{c4}$



With the idea that it will be hard for Black to avoid a queen exchange while untangling his pieces, and in the endgame White should be better. Even so, I feel Black should be okay eventually, although White is not in danger.

B23) 19. $\text{a1}$



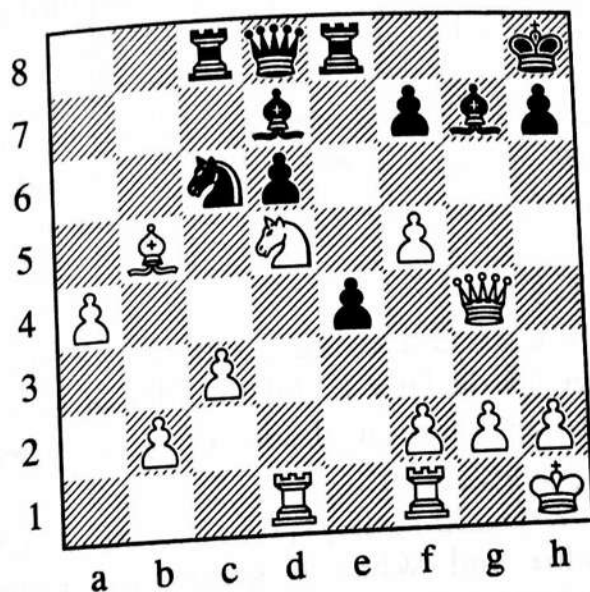
This has been played in almost all the games, and is of course the most logical continuation. The next move is rather forced:

19...♖c8

19...♖e5 20.♗e3 ♜f6 21.♞d5± shows the idea behind ♞ad1.

We need one final split: B231) 20.♔h1!N or B232) 20.♞fe1.

### B231) 20.♔h1!N



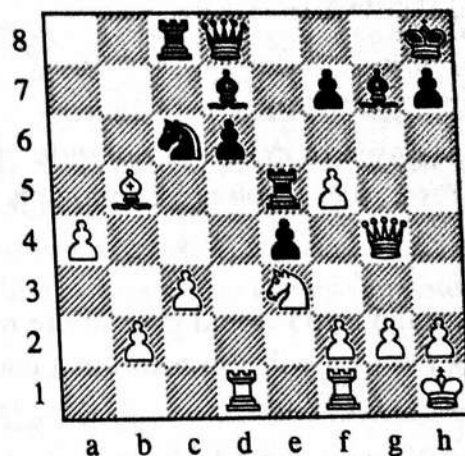
An interesting idea. A similar try is 20.h3, but I feel ♔h1 is a more useful move. The idea is that after ...♖e5, ♗e3, I don't see much point in having played ♞fe1. And from f1 perhaps the rook could assist in ideas such as f2-f4. Of course the downside is that Black isn't forced to play ...♖e5, but it's still one of the most natural continuations.

### 20...♗b8!?

Rather artificial, but perhaps objectively the best, as the computer claims.

It's tempting to try and force simplifications with 20...♗e5 21.♞xe4 ♙xb5 22.axb5 ♗d7 23.♞f4 ♗f6 24.♗e3! but White avoids the exchange of the knights, and with g4-g5 ideas coming up, it doesn't look very easy for Black. For example: 24...d5 25.g4 h6 26.♞g1↑

20...♖e5 21.♗e3

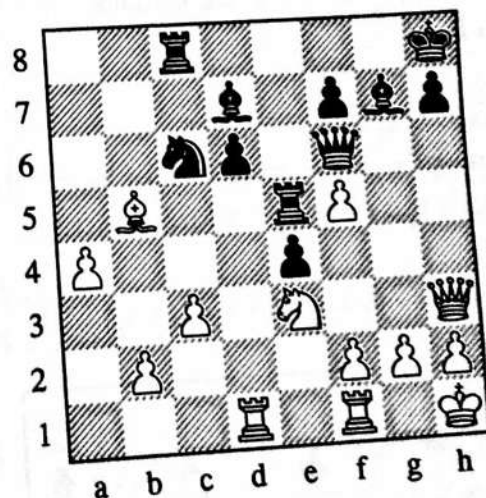


### 21...♞f6

21...♞f8 22.f4 (or 22.♞h3! with the idea of g2-g4) This looks unpleasant for Black. The king on h1 and rook on f1 are again ideally placed. 22...exf3 23.♞xf3

### 22.♞h3!?

22.f4! exf3 23.♞xf3 ♞g5 and now ♗c4, or f5-f6 and then ♗c4, also deserve attention. Now Black is forced to enter a slightly unpleasant endgame after:



### 22...♞xf5

If Black continues the same way as he did after 20.♞fe1 and ♞h3, then now 22...♖c5 23.g4! is a lot stronger since ♔h1 is of course more useful than ♞fe1. A few sample lines: 23...♗e5 (23...♞g8 24.♞g3 ♙f8 25.♞g1±) 24.♙xd7 ♗xd7 25.♞g2 ♞e5 (25...♗e5 26.g5±; 25...♞g5 26.♞xe4±) 26.g5 ♗b6 (26...♞g8 27.♞d4 d5 28.b4±) 27.♞d4 d5 28.f4! With a rather strong attack. 23.♗xf5 ♞xf5 24.♞xf5 ♞xf5 25.♞xd6 ♖c5



26.♖e1!?

Or 26.♖fd1.

26...♟a7 27.♙f1 f5 28.f3 exf3 29.gxf3

Black is close to a draw, but not quite there, and the three pawns look quite annoying.

21.c4!?

Now ...♙xb5, cxb5 would give White really menacing pawns. I will also mention a couple of alternatives for White:

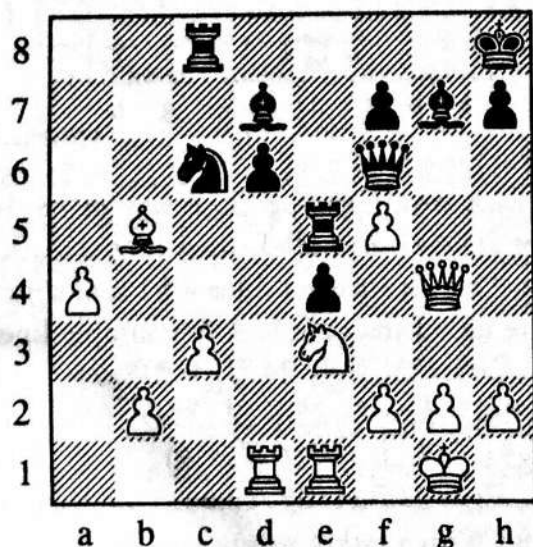
21.♖h5 ♜c5!? Another unusual defence from the computer, which leads to strange but interesting lines. For instance, there are g2-g4 ideas, but it seems hard to prove anything definite against the computer.

21.♖f4 ♙xb5 (21...♙e5 22.♖h6 ♜g8 23.f6! should be more pleasant for White, as we saw in the line with 19.♖f4. 23...♜g6 24.♖e3 ♙xf6 25.♖xe4±) 22.axb5 ♙e5 23.♖xe4 ♙xc3 24.♖f3 ♙xb2 25.♖b1 ♙e5 Black should be able to hold.

21...♙xb2 22.♖fe1

Again, this position is full of possibilities, but it feels too deep to explore it further.

B232) 20.♖fe1 ♜e5 21.♟e3 ♖f6



22.♖h3!N

22.♖e2 ♙xf5 23.♟xf5 ♖xf5 24.♖xd6 ♟b8 is the main theoretical line, but this has already been tested in a lot of games, and analysed in depth by Kotronias. The problem for White is that Black is able to generate a lot of activity. There are the direct moves such as ...♙f8-c5, but also against the typical g2-g3, Black has the strong plan of ...♙f6 and ...h5-h4. Of course this position could be analysed further, but it seems best to avoid it altogether.

Since ...♙xf5 is no longer possible (as we will see below) Black is required to play the rather artificial ...♜c5, which is a good sign for us.

22...♜c5

This is an interesting position to explore further. Particularly I find the idea of g2-g4 fascinating, and it leads to a complex middlegame.

22...♙xf5 23.♟xf5 ♖xf5 24.♖xf5 ♜xf5 25.♖xd6± and White is getting too many pawns for the piece.



23.g4!?

Another option is: 23.b4 ♜xc3 24.♖h5 ♖e5 25.♟h1 Frankly, I can't figure out what's going on here, but it doesn't seem easy to break through. On the other hand, the computer then suggests moves such as ...♖f6, which looks rather unimpressive.

23...♞d2!?

This also deserves attention, and is a safe plan. The idea is that after ...♞e5, ♙xd7 and ♞ed1, the d6-pawn is in trouble, and the computer's ...♞d8, ...♙c8 defensive plan looks so awkward.



23...♞d8

23...♞e5 24.♙xd7 ♞xd7 25.♞ed1 ♙f8 Now there are two lines that both show instructive ideas:

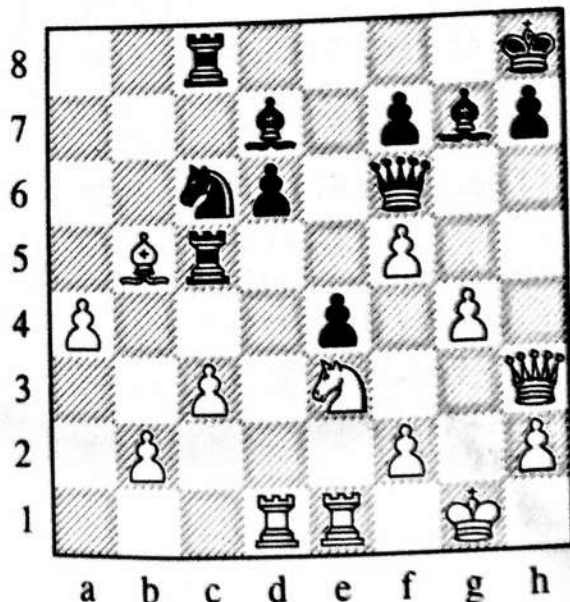
a) 26.♞d4 ♞e8 (26...♞b8 27.♞1d2 doesn't change much and there is also the option of 27.♞b4!?) 27.♞g4 ♞e5 28.♞h4 Black is stuck. 28...♞f6 29.g4!±

b) 26.b4! ♞xc3 This allows White to show his idea (26...♞5c6 is tougher). 27.♞d5 ♞xh3 28.♞xf6 ♞xf6 29.gxh3 d5 30.b5±

24.♞ed1 ♙c8 25.♙xc6

25.♞g4 ♞e7!

25...♞xc6 26.♞g4



23...♞g8

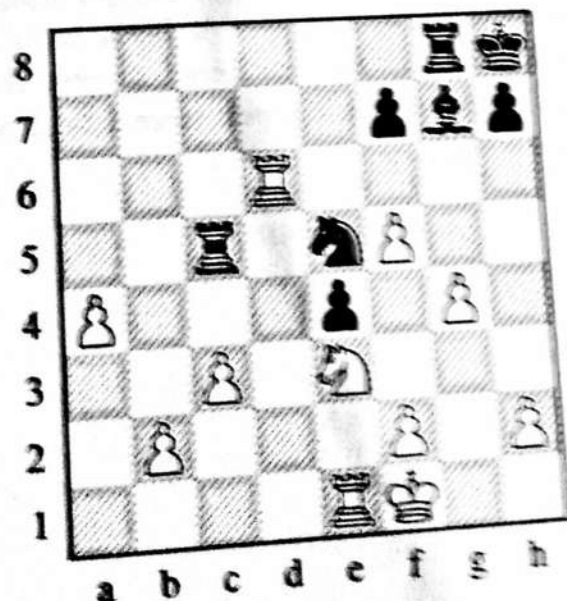
23...♞e5 24.♙xd7 ♞xd7 25.♞d5 (25.♞g2 ♞h4! 26.♞xc4 ♞e5 27.♞g2=) 25...♞d8 26.♞xc4 ♞f6 27.♞xf6 ♞xf6 We saw a similar structure in the 14...♞c8 line, but here White has a pawn more. Also, while ...d5-d4 ideas might exist, it's not so easy to implement them yet.

24.♞g3 ♞e5

24...♙f8 would be too slow. 25.♞f1! with the idea of h2-h4 and g4-g5 looks unpleasant for Black.



25.♙xd7 ♞xd7 26.♞xd6 ♞xd6 27.♞xd6 ♞e5 28.♞f1





Again, I'm not sure if Black can hold this or not, but it's certainly one-sided due to all White's pawns.

### Conclusion

In this chapter we focused on plans where Black castles quickly. The first point Black should note at move 16 is that he must prevent White establishing a bind with ♖g4-e4.

16...♞a7!? has some clever ideas. It covers the d7-knight, and avoids possible forks on b6, but White's queenside advance generally creates a lot of pressure, though of course the positions remains complicated.

The main line by far is 16...e4, which has the twin achievements of preventing the white queen from reaching her dream blockading square on e4, and also allowing black knight jumps to e5.

In the critical position I recommend both 19.♞f4!?N and 19.♞ad1 and in the latter line, after 19...♞c8, I can suggest both 20.♞h1!?N and 20.♞fe1. The multiple suggestions are no coincidence: the Sveshnikov remains a sound opening and I have not found a direct route to a clear advantage against the best defences, but I have offered many fresh ideas that will challenge Black. And even if Black is fully familiar with all the new lines I suggest, the resulting positions still appear more difficult to play for Black.



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